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The Mere Angélique

From an engraving by Van Schuppen of a portrait by Philippe de Champagne

Emery Walker P. 2

THE NUNS OF PORT ROYAL

AS SEEN IN THEIR OWN NARRATIVES

BY

M. E. LOWNDES, LITT.D.

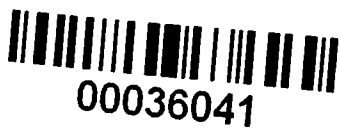
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PREFACE

THE Narratives of the Nuns of Port Royal introduce us to a world of women, and of women not merely set aside, by disability of sex, from the purposeful activities of man, but deprived also, by their own deliberate choice, of the peculiar dower of womanhood. Such a world might well seem remote from modern sympathies. True, the unmarried woman is frequent now as then, and in England to-day she plays her rôle in life oblivious as any nun of the reproductive functions which nature granted her, and which once were thought a woman's main reason for existence. But circumstances rather than renunciation, the mechanical working of monogamy in a society of disproportioned sexes, produces the phenomenon now, and it is not in a secluded life of prayer and submissive ordered service that the woman of to-day finds a substitute for wifely and maternal cares.

Nevertheless, despite radical difference of view and aim, feminine human nature would seem to have been very much then what it is now. The annals of these seventeenth-century nuns, whose convent was destroyed two hundred years ago, display it sometimes running to the weeds of petty jealousies, touchy and small-minded, and many a community to-day, even though uncloistered, could cap the tale ; they show it also, and this is the burden of the narrative, blossoming to the flower of self-forgetful magnanimity, and here again the open field of modern life can call up subjects for fit comparison. In truth, the narratives of Port Royal have an almost modern ring. Earlier conventual tales may show women in a similar light, with the same broad cleft between the petty and the generous-souled ; a S. Theresa or S. Catherine may emerge, as effectively as the *Mère Angélique*, from an environment where trivial cares abound. But the earlier figures are clouded to our understanding by a veil of mysticism ; these of the seventeenth

century are depicted with the clear-sightedness of a highly analytic, semi-rationalizing epoch, and appear before us, not as saints, but as very human women. The recrudescence of religious fervour then in France was tempered, at Port Royal more especially, by an accompaniment of critical common sense. In all that did not touch on definite articles of faith, the spirit of examination was fully roused, and was the more acute from a sense of past illusion and abuse. Above all it was freely exercised in the field of character. The general tendency of the age gave birth to La Rochefoucauld and La Bruyère; at Port Royal, care for sincerity played the part of curiosity and psychological insight in skilful probing of springs and motives of human conduct. An oft-repeated saying, 'that there can be no knowledge of humanity without acquaintance with Port Royal,' may be an exaggeration of enthusiasts; but the converse at least is true, that from the scrupulously candid narratives of nuns and *messieurs* reliable knowledge of human nature may be gathered.

In their later history, the nuns of Port Royal may suggest a parallel with modern women, as regards not character alone but conduct. These nuns, for choice hidden in their cloister, were brought to play, against their will, a prominent rôle, and to exercise intelligence and courage in matters making a general stir. They bore the brunt of suffering entailed by the Church's condemnation of their teachers not, in passive woman's immemorial way, with mere patient endurance of consequences others had set in train, but by active adherence to a cause. Trained though they were to obedience and nurtured in retirement, they displayed, under 'persecution', qualities,—pertinacity, grasp of the essential issues, power of logical argument, even of appeal to the law, with capacity for corporate action—, that are conspicuously displayed now, yet still excite surprise, among women more liberally taught to 'use their faculties. Even to the spectacle of virtuous women sustaining isolation and confinement for the cause they champion, and ever the more settled in their resolve, may the parallel with modern life be drawn.

Such meeting of extremes is but one of the curiosities of history. For the rest the memoirs here gathered are con-

cerned with the growth and character of the convent rather than with its dissolution and behaviour in the final days of stress. That is the climax, but not the substance of the tale. And only in broad outline and so far as it affects the convent is the tale of Jansenism and the long-enduring struggle between Jansenists and Jesuits told again here. That tale is one of great moment in ecclesiastical history; certain of the issues raised are vital still, others appear relegated to the limbo of questions, not solved indeed, but for ever shelved. It is of moment, besides, in the more general history of France in the seventeenth century; for the struggle, with the partisanship it aroused, left its mark upon literature and upon social life. The reader who would follow the tale in its ramifications and in detail, embedded as it were in the whole seventeenth century, can do so, to greatest profit and pleasure still, in the many volumes of Sainte-Beuve's *Port-Royal*; among more circumscribed accounts, none has superseded the contemporary *Abrégé de l'Histoire de Port-Royal* by the dramatist Racine, which can be most conveniently read in the admirable annotated edition by M. Gazier (1908). In English, *Port Royal*, by Charles Beard, B.A., in 2 vols., 1861, is a careful and impartial work, but cannot, naturally, sustain comparison with the *Port-Royal* of Sainte-Beuve. A recent survey of the movement of Jansenism, in its relation to *The Gallican Church*, is given in the *Cambridge Modern History*, vol. v, by Viscount St-Cyres.

For those who would penetrate to documents and sources, the *Répertoire Alphabétique des Personnes et des Choses de Port-Royal* par A. Maulvault (Champion, 1902) may serve as partial guide, although the bibliography, which for the rest does not profess to be complete, omits a work of such capital importance as the *Lettres de la Mère Angélique*. Sainte-Beuve (*Port-Royal*, 3rd ed., 1888, vol. iii, p. 631) also gives 'le catalogue d'une petite bibliothèque janséniste', and, at the close of his above-mentioned edition of Racine's *Histoire de Port-Royal*, M. Gazier gives a fuller *Essai de Bibliographie Port-Royaliste*. Special attention need be called here only to the *Mémoires de Godefroi Hermant*, since, long known in manuscript, they have only quite recently been published.¹ This exact and detailed

¹ *Mémoires de Godefroi Hermant*, docteur de Sorbonne, chanoine de

chronicle of events from 1630 to 1663 is not, certainly, the most agreeable reading among the memoirs of Port Royal, but is probably the best-informed as regards what passed beyond the actual precincts of the community, and it is now, by the care of its editor, M. Gazier, the most easily accessible, since the zeal of orthodoxy, added to the natural ravages of time, has made the earlier publications very scarce.

The majority of the narratives, letters, and other records preserved by nuns and *messieurs*, copied and even circulated in MS. by pious friends after the destruction of the convent, were printed in the first half of the eighteenth century. As regards the story of the nuns, the collection entitled *Mémoires pour servir à l'Histoire de Port-Royal, et à la Vie de la Révérende Mère Marie-Angélique, de Sainte Magdaleine Arnauld, Réformatrice de ce Monastère*, Utrecht, 1742, 3 vol. in-12°, is of primary value, and from it the narratives translated in this present volume, notably that by the Mère Angélique herself, are most extensively taken. Supplementary to it and of equally first-hand, though more scattered, interest, are the largely autobiographical *Vies intéressantes et édifiantes des Religieuses de Port-Royal et de plusieurs personnes qui leur étaient attachées* . . . s. l., 1750, 4 vol. in-12°; among them are the narratives of Sœur Geneviève de l'Incarnation Pineau, forcibly persuaded to become a nun, and of Sœur Jacqueline de Sainte Euphémie Pascal, translated here in full. Other sources drawn upon more or less extensively are the :

Lettres de la Révérende Mère Marie-Angélique Arnauld, abbesse et réformatrice de Port-Royal. À Utrecht, 1742-4, 3 vol. in-12°;

Entretiens ou Conférences de la Révérende Mère Marie Angélique Arnauld, abbesse et réformatrice de Port-Royal. À Bruxelles, 1757, 1 vol. in-12°;

The graphic work by a Port Royal nun (Sœur Eustoquie de Brégy) entitled *Modèle de Foi et de Patience dans*

Beauvais, ancien recteur de l'Université, sur l'Histoire Ecclésiastique du XVII^e siècle (1630-63), publiés pour la première fois sur le manuscrit autographe et sur les anciennes copies authentiques, avec une introduction et des notes par A. Gazier. Paris: Librairie Plon, Plon-Nourrit et C^{ie}, 1905-8, 5 vol. in-8° (vol. vi and index are still to appear).

toutes les traverses de la vie et dans les grandes persécutions, ou Vie de la Mère Marie des Anges (Suireau), Abbessse de Maubuisson et de Port-Royal, s. l., 1754, 2 vol. in-12° ; Mémoires touchant la vie de M. de Saint-Cyran, par M. Lancelot, pour servir d'éclaircissement à l'histoire de Port-Royal. Cologne, aux dépens de la Compagnie, 1738, 2 vol. in-12° ; Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de Port-Royal, par M. Fontaine. Utrecht, aux dépens de la Compagnie, 1736, 2 vol. in-12° ; Mémoires de Pierre Thomas, sieur Du Fossé, publiés en entier pour la première fois d'après le manuscrit original, avec une introduction et des notes, par F. Bouquet. Rouen, 1876-9, 4 vol. in-8° ; Recueil de plusieurs pièces pour servir à l'Histoire de Port-Royal, ou supplément aux Mémoires de MM. Fontaine, Lancelot et du Fossé. Utrecht, aux dépens de la Compagnie, 1740, 1 vol. in-12° ;

and, for the conclusion only, two collections which are, for the latter days of Port Royal, of complementary value to the *Mémoires pour servir . . .* and the *Vies . . . des Religieuses . . .* for the earlier, viz. :

Divers Actes, Lettres et Relations des Religieuses de Port-Royal du Saint-Sacrement, touchant la persécution et les violences qui leur ont été faites au sujet de la signature du Formulaire. s. l., n.d. [1722], in-4° ;

Histoire des Persécutions des Religieuses de Port-Royal. Écrites par elles-mêmes. À Ville-Franche, 1753, in-4°.

The few other works cited or referred to are sufficiently indicated in the notes.

The nuns of Port Royal were introduced to English readers as long ago as 1816, by Mrs. Schimmelpenninck, a member of the Moravian Brotherhood, in a *Narrative of the Demolition of the Monastery of Port Royal des Champs*, and more fully in 1829, in *Select Memoirs of Port Royal*. These works were inspired by sympathy with elements in Port Royal and the movement of Jansenism that appear akin to the spirit of Protestantism : insistence upon the power of grace and upon the spiritual content of sacraments and ceremonies, sobriety

of faith and puritanism of living, with the attitude of comparative independence in respect of Papal authority. A contrary tendency is visible in two recent works upon Port Royal: *Angélique of Port Royal*, by W. K. H., 1905, and *The Story of Port Royal*, by Ethel Romanes, 1907. There the nuns and *messieurs* appear rather in the light they would themselves have undoubtedly preferred, as faithful children of the Roman Catholic Church, clinging to her at all hazards and at one with her on points that to the Protestant mind seem non-essential or superstitious. The present account, so far as it may claim to strike an individual note, would do so by complete impartiality, even indifference, on this point, and would gladly rouse a purely human interest in these nuns, without pronouncing on their principles or purposing to edify the reader of whatever school of thought. For the rest, the tale is left, so far as the exigencies of narrative permit, to the chief personages themselves concerned. Only, since the accounts repeat and overlap, selection and arrangement,—curtailment sometimes and sometimes elucidation—, has been inevitable, and inevitable also a slight connective framework.

The reader may distinguish at a glance these particular seventeenth-century narratives and citations, from the general supplementary tale, by greater closeness of type and, again, by the more generous use of capital letters. I have thought well, even at the risk of apparent typographical irregularity, to observe this distinction, honouring, e. g. nuns, novices, and postulants with capitals where the nuns themselves, and their eighteenth-century editors, do so, but without carrying the respect further. All that serves to emphasize and demarcate the actual sources commends itself naturally to their translator, upon whom, and not upon the proof-reader, rests the sole responsibility in this matter of capitals. The attempt has been made also to preserve the physiognomy of the narratives in their easy disregard of style and structure, and, more difficult task, in their often picturesque and always vivid simplicity. It is not for the writer to judge how far the endeavour has succeeded.

As regards illustrations, the views of the convent and the

portraits of Saint-Cyran, Jansenius, and the Mère Angélique (frontispiece) are reproduced, by kind permission of the Court of Sion College, from prints in the College Library. The views, which were suppressed when Port Royal was finally condemned, and are in consequence scarce, were engraved and sold by a certain Madeleine Hortemels, daughter of a bookseller, and doubtless represent faithfully the appearance of the convent in its latter days. The design for the Church of Port Royal in Paris is from a book of Le Pautre's architectural engravings in the British Museum Reading-room. Comparison with the building still extant, or with the contemporary engraving by Marot (reproduced by M. André Hallays, *Le Pèlerinage de Port-Royal*, 1909), show the design to have been carried out in a slightly modified and simpler form. The view of the Church of the Carmelites from an engraving by Israel Silvestre is taken, by kind permission of the Duke of Devonshire, from the collection at Chatsworth, for in the matter of engravings by Silvestre the rich Print-room of the British Museum betrays comparative poverty. The portraits are after paintings by Philippe de Champaigne, devoted friend to Port Royal, whose daughter was among the nuns and was distinguished by a miraculous cure from illness in the year 1662. The famous painting, now in the Louvre, by which the father celebrated this event, is reproduced from a photograph by Giraudon. The second portrait given of the Mère Angélique is from an original painting by Champaigne, a replica of which is at Chantilly. I am indebted to the owner, M. Gazier, for the photograph and for leave to reproduce it. The death-mask of the Mère Angélique is from a photograph of the original now in the possession of the little community of *Sœurs de Sainte Marthe* at Magny-les-Hameaux, not far from the site of Port Royal des Champs. The mask is thought to have been modelled by the niece, so diligent in collecting memoirs, Sœur Angélique de S. Jean *Arnauld*; its eventual destination, when the Sœurs de Sainte Marthe shall have accomplished the process of peaceful extinction which was denied to those of Port Royal, is the museum erected upon the site of the ancient convent-chapel.

The ruins, or site rather, for little else remains, of Port Royal des Champs still keep alive, under the zealous custodianship of

M. Gazier, the memory of nuns and *messieurs*. And to M. Gazier, who guards in Paris also the archives of Port Royal, I here gratefully record thanks for many courtesies and for kindly encouragement and aid when, now some years ago, I first thought of presenting the *Nuns of Port Royal* to the English public. This year M. Gazier is bringing out, in record of the second centenary of the final suppression of the convent (October the 29th, 1709), an album, *Port-Royal au XVII^e siècle, Images et portraits*, reproducing, among the wealth of illustrative matter, many rare and beautiful engravings. May this present volume, in its humbler fashion, render in England a similar tribute to the memory of the nuns.

M. E. L.

LONDON,
Oct. 1st, 1909.

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THE NUNS OF PORT ROYAL

INTRODUCTORY

THE Abbey of Port Royal, in the valley of Chevreuse, some twenty miles distant from Paris, dates back to a foundation as early as 1204. The pious Mathilde de Garlande, wife of Mathieu de Marli, of the house of Montmorenci, crusader, applied then a sum of money left in her hands for good works that should call down blessing on her husband's enterprise, to erect upon the site a convent for women. It was at first a small community of only twelve nuns, but, adopted early into the Cistercian Order and enriched by subsequent gifts, it grew and flourished with that Order in France, and again dwindled with the decay of monastic fervour. By the beginning of the seventeenth century it had fallen, like the majority of French convents, into sad decay. The small handful of nuns—eleven, and three of them imbecile—with their aged and infirm Abbess, lived as pleasantly as they could in the lonely country, and troubled themselves not in the least to observe their prescribed Rule of S. Benedict. The Abbey had been arrogated to the Crown, and had become in consequence a gift to be conferred for any reason of goodwill rather than for piety in a candidate for the post of Abbess.

The semi-secularization of Church-gifts had become a matter of course. There remained scarcely a family but looked to the Church to provide for some of its members; for younger sons by a benefice, for superfluous daughters by a place in a convent—as simple nun when the influence of the family was but slight, as Abbess where rank was high. The convents for their part, filled with girls sent from motives of economy not of piety, were more and more stringent in exacting a dowry

which, though less than required to establish a woman 'in the world', was sufficiently high to exclude one really poor; and, changed in purpose from homes for saints to mere refuges for spinsters, they had changed consequently in habits. There the unmarried woman had a recognized place. She might live with honour if she would, enjoying still the innocent pleasures of visitors, feasting, and even elegance—on the nun's model—of dress; were an honourable life not to her taste, opportunities for less sanctioned amusements were seldom lacking. Only the ancient profession, of poverty, seclusion, and obedience, remained unaltered.

The Nuns of Port Royal conformed, so far as their limited chances allowed, to current practice; and in the year 1599 the King, Henri IV, appointed them in the most approved manner of the day a new Abbess, to succeed on the death of the aged Madame de Boulehard actually reigning. The appointment was of a child of seven, Jacqueline Arnauld by name, second daughter of M. Arnauld, barrister, and granddaughter of M. Marion, who, also in the law, occupied the post of *Avocat-General*. This maternal grandfather, M. Marion, was a man of note, who was brought by his position into close contact with distinguished people and was honoured by the personal friendship of the King. He it was who, seeing the rapidity with which his daughter's family was increasing, and that already there were several girls, used his influence to obtain the Abbey of Port Royal for the little Jacqueline, and at the same time that of S. Cyr for the still younger Jeanne. The appointment of such very young Abbesses went a step beyond even current practice, or at least beyond current practice as approved by Rome. In order to procure the confirmatory Bulls it was necessary to represent the children as already in their teens; and the false statement was accordingly made, without scruple, it would seem, by these men of unquestioned probity and honour—so venial were such matters held.

From a bad beginning—we cite the chroniclers of Port Royal—good cannot be hoped for. The appointment in this lax manner of the child Jacqueline Arnauld, known to history as the Mère Angélique, is the exception to prove the rule.

That Abbess herself wrote in after-life the tale of God's providence for Port Royal, recounting how from this evil, and from others, good came. So far as possible in her words, and in those of her nuns, we propose to retell the tale.

The narrative of the Mère Angélique is incomplete. She wrote it unwillingly also, and with something of dryness and constraint, acceding to her nuns' wishes only at the express command of her Director. The circumstances are told by one of the nuns, presumably by the mother's niece and namesake, Angélique de S. Jean, who was especially active in gathering memoirs :—

'The occasion which led the Mère Angélique to write this narrative must be made known. We had begun without her knowledge, more than two years previously, to write memoirs of all we had been able to learn relating to the early Nuns (*les Anciennes*) of Port Royal and to herself, touching what she had done to establish reform there and afterwards. But although we endeavoured to get her to talk on these matters, we had yet greater desire to engage her to write about them. We availed ourselves for that of a reason she had furnished us with herself, namely, that she frequently said to us, speaking of what had happened to her, that she had ground to write a *Book of the Providence of God*, so many had been her experiences of it; and that there was nothing she more desired to leave us when she died, than a great confidence in this adorable Providence which had worked miracles for us, for no otherwise could she style all the Conduct of God upon this House. As she often repeated this, and even told us that the wish sometimes came to her to write this *Book of Providence*, for fear that we might come to forget what God had done for us, and that from this forgetfulness we might pass to the infidelity of seeking human support, as happened to so many Religious, we urged her greatly several times to undertake it. But she was at bottom so opposed to making books that what she said was only to give expression to the desire she had to establish us in gratitude and trust in God, and she thrust us away when we tried to speak to her of writing in good earnest. Since we saw accordingly that we gained nothing by persuasion, we thought well to bring obedience to bear, for that she never resisted.

'We had recourse for that to M. Singlin' (Confessor at Port Royal), 'and we implored him to ordain it her. He did so, and she had much distress over it, although as a rule she felt

none in obeying. She was quite sad about it, and perhaps she suspected the use we desired to make of it. For the thing she dreaded most in the world was that she should be written about, or spoken of advantageously after her death. Since, however, she was constrained to yield, she made a retreat in a little distant cell, which was called the Watch (*la guette*), during which, giving more time to prayer than to writing, she composed this narrative, with such distaste that she could not be induced to finish it; and she seized the pretext of other affairs to break it off at the point where it ends.'

Supplementing the unfinished tale, we have notes, taken at the time, of the Mother's conversation with her nephew, M. le Maître, to whom, since he himself was in pious retreat, she spoke with full and confidential freedom. Then again we have her *Letters*, three full volumes, and again narratives by the nuns, many and voluminous, gathered by the piety, happily regardless of her aunt's wishes, of Angélique de S. Jean.

Veüe de l'abbaye de port Royal des Champs

2



Paris chez Cochin graveur du Roy rue Jacques vis à vis les Maturins. Madeleine hortemelis fecit



VIEWS OF THE ABBEY AND OF THE CLOISTER OF PORT ROYAL DES CHAMPS

From engravings by Madeleine Hortemelis

CHAPTER I

The childhood of the Mère Angélique.

WITH the advent of the Mère Angélique, as child-abbess, to her convent, the vital history of Port Royal begins. And the mother's narrative, though it brought the tale of God's Providence to no legitimate close, opens at that true beginning. The reader may look back, through her later retrospect, upon that early scene and retrace with her the gradual change from lethargy to life.

Narrative of the chief events of Port Royal from the establishment of Reform up to 1638. By the Mother Marie Angélique (of S. Magdalene) Arnauld.¹

‘Glory to Jesus, to the very Holy Sacrament !

‘In the name of the very Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

‘I write, for obedience sake, a narrative of what has passed in this House since, fifty-two years ago, I was brought here to be Abbess, July 5, 1602, at the age of only ten years and ten months, by a very great abuse common at the time, when there was no longer practice of discipline in the appointment to Benefices, and in our Order hardly any regularity. Things were such that, whereas my father did not venture to dream that I could be given the Abbatial Blessing at this early age, the General of the Order of Cîteaux (who had had me made Coadjutrix by Madame Boulehart, Abbess of this House, before I was eight, to gratify my grandfather, M. Marion, *Avocat-General*, who was a friend of his, and had made me Profess at nine), expressed a desire to bless me at his hands at the age of eleven ; which he did in this House with a great gathering and great festivity, with everybody inside the cloister of the Monastery, as in a secular house.

¹ *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de Port-Royal, et à la Vie de la Révérende Mère Marie-Angélique de Ste-Magàeleine Arnauld, Réformatrice de ce Monastère.* Utrecht, 1742, vol. i, p. 262 seq.

'God, who in His infinite goodness did not fail to look upon this Monastery with pity, brought about that my mother, who feared God but who had at that time perhaps even more love for worldly honour than for that of God, being obliged to stay here for several weeks on from the month of July when I arrived, to set the temporal affairs in order and see to the repairs of the House, which was in a very bad condition, and to prepare besides all the things required for the ceremony of the Benediction, observed certain criminal disorders, partaken in, however, by only one of the twelve Sisters who were in the House when I came; for the others had been preserved by a special grace of God, although they were exposed constantly to the evil through the disorderly conduct of sundry persons who never left the Monastery, where some of them were in service.

'As soon as my mother perceived the misconduct of this Nun, the senior of the House though she was only thirty-three, she contrived, through the medium of my grandfather, to make the General transfer her to another House; and from that moment, although the cloister was not kept until several years later, all the persons who had occasioned misconduct kept away for fear of my father and mother, who were in great alarm, not only for me, but also for the others; lest the matter should give rise to blame of their control, rather than of that of a child like me, incapable of having any. They watched accordingly with great care, that nothing should occur contrary to honour and to decency; for it was in that alone that they saw good conduct. To that end they obtained the consent of the General to place with me a Nun from another House, to look after my control and the economy of the House, for which latter she was much better fitted than to conduct me, since she was very ignorant, and more so than could be believed, of the things of God.

'As regards the Nuns, with whom she did not interfere at all, there was one of the House who was very good and who feared God, and her they made Prioress, and she kept the Convent going in as great regularity as any House of the Order. This Sister, without considering my age, showed me such great respect that the others, following her example, did the same; so the House was at peace. She asked me, and caused me to be asked, for all permissions, and had me paid all respects in the same manner as the previous Abbess, who had made herself so feared by the Sisters that they were like children with her; she had received them all, too, very young. God made use of this disposition to fear, to preserve peace in the House, through the docility of these Sisters.

'He made use also of the kindness of my father and of my mother, who showed them great affection and took great care to have them well treated, and to repair and do up the House, which was in a very bad state both in consequence of the wars of the League and because of the extreme old age of the Abbess, whose servants ruined her by their untrustworthiness, all keeping good living, save the poor Nuns, who were given as little as possible. Thus without their thinking of their vow of poverty, for which they had no more affection than they had knowledge of its excellence, they were made to observe it with such rigour that, in the midst of woods, so little firing was given them that they had to go in search of it in the gardens. Their allowance on fast-days, which were four days a week, was nothing but two eggs with very little butter. They were given for the whole year only two basketfuls of fruit, although there was a great quantity which was sold. And everything was in like manner; and in illness they were as badly treated as in health.

'The divine providence made use of all this ill-treatment to make these Sisters love me, seeing that they were better off under my rule; so that there was such peace in the House and such order as regards the service and other observances, that the General of the Order, on his visit in the year 1605 (when I was only fourteen years old), was so satisfied with the House that he left us a report in which he said he had found us in good order, and prescribed nothing further, save that the number of the Nuns should be increased to sixteen. We were as yet but twelve, having admitted only two; and of those I had found there, one was dead and one had left.

'However, all this fine order consisted only in performing the service fairly well at the right hours, with the exception of Matins, which were said at four in the morning (the Sisters taking care to attend), and in living in peace and human fellowship. As for the rest, we did nothing but amuse ourselves and go about in our property, as was permitted and even enjoined by the report, which observed that the Abbess should take her community to walk in the grounds after Vespers.

'The time passed in this way from the year 1602 up to the year 1607, when God willed to promote His work of mercy upon this House, at a time when I am forced to say that, as I grew in years, I grew also in wickedness. For I could no longer endure the Religious Life, which I had never looked upon otherwise than as an insupportable yoke; and nevertheless I bore it, diverting myself as best I could, without telling my trouble to any one at all and pretending to be happy.

When certain persons said to me that, since I had taken my vows under age, I could retract, I asserted that I had no wish to ; and it is true that, with a great love of the world, I still could not, although I disliked the Veil, make up my mind to quit it ; believing that I could not do so without going to perdition ; that there was no law which dispensed me from belonging to God ; that He had shown me too great an honour in taking me for Himself, and that I could not abandon my calling without great ingratitude :

‘ I do not know whence these thoughts as to the holiness of my calling could have come to me, seeing that the life I led in it was wholly pagan and profane. True, I distinguished very well between what I ought to do and what I did ; and having often enough great apprehensions of the judgement of God, I thought to myself that I would do penance when I was old. In the meantime I took my liberty, and used to go with one or two Nuns to visit our neighbours ; and they began also to pay me visits, although God did not permit me to do in this any great harm as the world calls harm.

‘ It so happened that my mother heard of these liberties I was beginning to take, and came here. She reproved me like a true mother, with so many tears that she greatly touched me, making me sorry for the pain I was giving her ; and on the other hand I was very sorry, too, for myself, seeing myself reduced either to lead a life which I felt very melancholy or else to grieve my father and mother and to live without honour, for I knew very well that there could be honour only in living in accordance with one’s condition. I begged hearty forgiveness from my mother and promised to live with all the propriety and prudence that she wished. I remained very sad ; and instead of having recourse to God, I proceeded to divert myself by reading the Lives of Plutarch and other profane works.

‘ Two months later I fell ill with a very violent doubletertian ague, which was a special grace of God upon me. It came to me the day of S. James my patron saint, the 25th of July. My mother at once brought me a doctor, and, finding the illness very severe, my father sent to have me fetched in a litter, that I might be nursed at home. This illness lasted up to the end of August, with such violence that I was held to be in danger ; and after it had diminished I still had the fever up to the end of November. During all this time quite extraordinary care was taken of me. My mother put me in her room and was so attentive to my needs that I never called the nurse, who was close to my bed, but my mother was there first. This illness, although I did not think at all of

God and saw no single person who spoke a word to me of Him,—but on the contrary all the news of Paris was discussed at my bedside, where there was generally a large assembly—, did not fail nevertheless to be of extreme service to me. The great affection which my father and mother had shown me made me resolve from my heart that, in order to please them, I would remain a Nun and would live with all the modesty that I should, without looking farther and without considering my duty towards God. Accordingly I returned with goodwill to this convent, where the Sisters received me with extreme joy and with expressions of greater affection than ever. I felt affection also for them, and I spent the winter still very weak after my illness.’

Our Mother’s narrative has brought us swiftly to the crisis of her youth. We break it here that we may apprehend more fully, if it may be, the girlish figure thus early fronting destiny. In old age, talking with her beloved nephew, M. le Maître, she speaks more freely than she writes about herself, little suspecting that he too—a recluse touched by grace and pledged to Eternity—cherished the vainglorious design of perpetuating her memory. He took her words down after each interview, and only death hindered him from weaving these reminiscences into a ‘Life’. He would seem to have been skilful in evoking the images of childhood :—

‘On April 2, 1652,’ he records,¹ ‘the Mère Angélique talked to me with more freedom than she ever had done, about the conditions of her youth, exaggerating her estrangement from God and the great perils from which the Divine Providence had saved her. “In the first place,” she said to me, “I was only seven years old when my grandfather Marion, seeing that my father had five daughters who followed with only a year between, resolved to make some of them Nuns, and chose me, as second daughter, to be the first of those he wished to take the Veil. With that object he made me come to him and said: ‘My child, would you not like to be a Nun?’ And since I had not much notion what it meant and he was afraid I should say no, he anticipated me and added: ‘But, my child, you will not be a common Nun, I will make you Abbess

¹ *Relation de plusieurs Entretiens de la Mère Angélique avec M. le Maître son neveu, qui les écrivait sur-le-champ dans le dessein de s’en servir un jour pour son Histoire, Mémoires pour servir . . .*, vol. ii, p. 249 seq.

and mistress over the others.' I perceived at once that I should have to fall in with his wishes and since what he had added as to the quality of Abbess sweetened a little what seemed to me very hard, I replied : ' Yes, grandfather, I should like to.' But at the same time I was splitting with rage, and I betook myself to the gallery close by and began to say to myself, ' How unlucky I am to be born only second daughter, for if I were the eldest they would have me married.' But I immediately recovered myself a little and reflected that I came so close on my sister Catherine, who was the eldest, that my father could not very well have me married like my sister ; so I made up my mind to accept the Veil since they wished it, and on the spot I returned to the room and said ; ' I have only consented to be a Nun on condition you make me Abbess ; you have promised, remember your promise.' ” ”

On another occasion (' on Saturday, June 7, Eve of the Holy Trinity '), this same nephew records, he was returning from Paris to Port Royal des Champs in company with the Mère Angélique, M. Singlin, his uncles M. Arnauld and M. d'Andilly, and his brother de Saci, when she narrated to them the following anecdote, à propos of her little brother Antoine, who had died at three and a half when she herself was about six :—

' He was the prettiest child that ever one saw, and a miracle of cleverness and beauty. He was everything that could be desired in a child. He loved me exclusively and his affection was a great comfort to me, for my mother did not care for me. But since she loved my little brother Antoine passionately, and he loved me to such an extent that he could not live without me, she allowed me to stay with him, whereas before his birth and after his death, she used to send me every morning away from her to M. Marion, the *Avocat-Général*, my grandfather, who loved me tenderly and often played with me. ' I used to spend all the day in his room or in his study. And because my brothers and sisters were kept at home in my father's apartment by my mother, who was fond of them and disliked me, sending me to M. Marion as soon as I was dressed, in order to revenge myself in a manner for being turned out of the house, I used to bolt the little door of M. Marion's apartment as soon as I was through, to prevent my brothers and sisters from coming and sharing with me the affection of my grandfather, whom I was with constantly, following him about almost everywhere, whether in his room or his study, and generally holding him by the sleeve. When I found any

of my sisters with M. Marion I chased them away, telling them, "Be off with you home, this is my house and not yours." I was sly in those days, and played the circumspect. And as M. Marion liked to hear me talk, he used to tell the persons of rank, his familiar friends, to ask me my name, and they would see that this little girl would give them a different answer to the same question if they asked it in his house or in that of his son-in-law, M. Arnauld, who lived hard by, a wall only dividing them. Whereupon they asked my name and I answered "Jacqueline Marion", and when the same persons took my hand and led me to my father's house and then asked me my name, I answered "Jacqueline Arnauld", for I wanted always to be taken for daughter of the master of the house I was in, in order to be thought much of.'

These childish tales show the sensitive, but imperious and self-assertive character of the future Abbess. Another anecdote marks her dominant nature in contrast to her younger sister Jeanne, the second of his grandchildren chosen by M. Marion for that rôle. The children seem both to have been pre-occupied with the thought of their promised dignity. One day, however, the five-year-old Jeanne (our future Mère Agnès) followed M. Marion into his study and said, 'I have come to tell you, grandpapa, that I do not wish to be Abbess. For they say that Abbesses have to look after the souls of their Nuns, and I have enough to do in looking after my own.' But Jacqueline (our Mère Angélique) took up her words and said, 'But I want to be, grandpapa, and I will see that they do their duty.'¹

The early indication of character is borne out in the subsequent lives of the sisters, destined by their grandfather each for the rôle of Abbess, destined by the fates to be sister and complementary spirits, the 'two olives', in the self-same convent. Fondness for the dignity clung, however, in fact, longer to the younger and gentler of the two. Jeanne, or Agnès as we know her, took more kindly to conventual life than her sister; was easily devout, liked the services and the singing, and, as she grew into girlhood, delighted in prayer

¹ *Relation ou Histoire suivie de la Vie de la Mère Marie-Angélique Arnauld . . . par la Mère Angélique de S. Jean Arnauld, Mémoires pour servir . . .*, vol. i, p. 8.

and even in fasting and penance. But she delighted also in her rank and in the ceremonious respect paid to her as Abbess of S. Cyr, and she was with difficulty weaned from that vanity. Angélique, on the contrary, as her distaste increased for the profession of nun, lost whatever consolatory pleasure she had taken in her rank and authority. 'God gave me,' she told her nephew, 'from the age of thirteen or fourteen a great indifference upon that point.' Had she been pleased with her dignity, she would have been, so she felt, lost beyond hope. .

Neither was the Mère Angélique's childhood without its movements of piety, though they fell dead for lack of nurture, and failed to reconcile her to her calling. She recalls her emotion, even to tears, at the age of seven, on hearing the tale of the Passion, but also that she went off to play and to quarrel as usual.¹ Taken to confess about the same period, and bidden by her Confessor ask pardon of God for the faults she had acknowledged, she knelt down in the courtyard of the house, and, fixing her eyes upon the heavens, where she had heard that God dwelt, she asked forgiveness with so strong a feeling of reverence and faith that it remained in her mind as her first act of discernment and reason. She speaks with retrospective envy of the children of Port Royal, so carefully trained and under a discipline that they knew to be for their good. 'Had they taught me,' she tells her nephew, 'in the like manner, speaking to me of God and of the duties of a Christian child, they might have made of me what they would.' As it was, left to the care and arbitrary discipline of ignorant servants, she could recall as a red-letter day in the waste of childish years the occasion—it was the day of Pentecost—when she was whipped for irreverence in church, by a woman sensible enough to point out her fault and the grounds of the punishment.²

Little care, truly, was taken in the young Abbess' training. She was given the Veil a few days before her eighth birthday, and heartily enjoyed the ceremony and festivities held in her

¹ *Relation . . . par la Mère Angélique de S. Jean Arnauld*, Mémoires pour servir . . . , vol. i, p. 9. Cf. *Relation de la Mère Marie-Dorothée de l'Incarnation* Le Conte, loc. cit., vol. ii, p. 420.

² *Entretiens . . . avec M. le Maître*, loc. cit., vol. ii, p. 251.

honour. Then, after a winter passed in the little Jeanne's convent of S. Cyr, she was sent to finish her education and await the death of the Abbess of Port Royal, whom she was to succeed, at the convent of Maubuisson. There, at nine years old, she took the final vows. Some one among the onlookers pitied her, and said, 'She does not know what she is doing.' The child, overhearing, resented keenly the slight paid to her intelligence. 'Do they think I am silly?' she said to herself, 'that I should not know what I am about. I know very well'.¹ Later, when she would gladly have revoked that step, the conviction still remained with her that she had indeed known what she was doing and was bound by her vows.

Now Maubuisson was of all convents the least suited to be a school of good manners, let alone spiritual teaching. The Abbess, Angélique d'Estrées, was sister of Gabrielle, mistress of Henri IV, and had obtained the charge at Gabrielle's request to facilitate, it was supposed, the latter's meetings with the King. The Abbess certainly had no scruples on the subject; her own manners, on the contrary, were so scandalous that Gabrielle herself is said to have remonstrated with her. Her mode of life was not merely, as was common enough at the time, purely secular, but also highly disreputable, the scandal reaching later such a height that she was deposed and shut up in the *Filles Pénitentes*—an event to which our history will bring us again. To this gay and scandalous person the little Jacqueline was given in charge, and in compliment to her and no other did she receive the new name of Angélique. She was to some extent under the Abbess' personal care and had as companion one of her children—one of the twelve whom rumour accredited her with, and who were brought up diversely, it was said, *according to the rank of the father*. But for the most part, presumably, the child's upbringing fell to the nuns, who, under the charge of an excellent Prioress, came but little in contact with their Abbess. The Prioress took all care to keep them away—the tale goes that on one occasion certain young gallants in the

¹ *Relation . . . de la Mère Angélique de S. Jean, Mémoires pour servir . . .*, vol. i, p. 11.

suite of Henri IV caught a nun and carried her off to the Abbess' quarters; but the valiant Prioress hastened to the rescue and recovered her charge, unhurt though frightened, while the king turned the matter off as a jest.¹ Yet the Prioress was far from strait-laced; she was at pains to procure all innocent amusement for her nuns, leading them forth, for example, on feast-days to dance on the green with the neighbouring monks, but always with due regard for propriety.²

The easy-going régime, healthy enough no doubt for the child, could scarcely have tended to piety. And yet when, at the age of eleven, she was summoned, on the death of the old Abbess, to take possession of her convent of Port Royal, she could forget the pomp and festivity of her installation in the sense of God's presence as she received, on the same day, her first communion. A cobbler of the neighbourhood lent her a book of prayer which she read so intently—it was her sole instruction—as to be unaware of the crowd in the church.³

The devout moment was prophetic, it may be, of the future; it bore no fruit at the time. The little Abbess, now installed and, under the new name of Angélique, confirmed in possession by a fresh Papal Bull, conceived at once a distaste for the conventual life, for the dress and the religious observances. Nevertheless, she would seem to have passed, among her nuns and under the watchful eye of her mother, a normal and fairly happy childhood, troubling her head but little about her calling. An affectionate and high-spirited child, she was beloved by her nuns. She could act the Abbess on occasion, receiving a big novice of seventeen with all gravity; welcoming Henri IV, at the head of her nuns—herself mounted on pattens to look taller—, when he came by hunting and called at the convent to see her father. '*Je baise les mains de Mme l'Abbesse,*' he called in at the convent windows the following day.⁴ She could reprove her nuns even, '*d'un ton d'Abbesse,*' when they stayed gossiping out of bounds—she had perhaps

¹ *Modèle de Foi et de Patience . . . ou Vie de la Mère Marie des Anges [Suireau], Abbessé de Maubuisson et de Port-Royal, 1754, pp. 58-9.*

² *Relation de la Mère Angélique de S. Jean . . . , Mémoires pour servir . . . , vol. i, p. 129.*

³ *Ib.*, p. 14.

⁴ *Entretiens . . . avec M. le Maître, loc. cit., . . . , vol. ii, p. 254.*

learnt from the Prioress of Maubuisson to have a proper dread of such licence. But in general she paid thoughtful deference to '*Dame Prieure*', so considerate of her claims, and she corrected only by private liberality the parsimony of the nun set in charge of her and the house.¹

With the passing of childhood there passed, however, the childish contentment. In her talks with her nephew, Angélique tells the tale with certain details of interest—may the reader pardon a repetition which brings us back to her narrative.

'One day she told me,' he notes: 'From the time that I became Abbess in 1602, at the age of eleven, up to the age of fifteen, I had a horrible aversion for the Convent. I was wide-awake and wild (*éveillée et folâtre*), more than can be conceived. But God had given me a discretion and natural good-sense which prevented me from doing anything immodest. Nevertheless I cared only to play, and converse and amuse myself: and all the observances of Religion were distasteful to me, since my heart was not open to piety. So that I was angry with my sister Catherine, who afterwards married, because, when she came here, she was more devout than I, and liked singing with the Sisters, which I did not like at all. At last, when I was fifteen, since I knew very well that I was not pledged to the Veil, being under age, and because I had an inclination for the life of a good married woman, I contemplated leaving Port Royal and returning to the world, without telling my father and mother, in order to free myself from the yoke which I found unendurable, and to get married somewhere. I fancied then that at the worst I could take refuge at La Rochelle, although I was a good Catholic and although God had given me a secret aversion of heresy, to the point that when one of my relatives who was a Huguenot told me that if I were to read the Epistle to the Romans I should find in it the refutation of the Roman Catholic faith, I read it and found just the contrary, because it pleased God to enlighten me with the light of the true faith.'

'While these thoughts were filling my mind, and I was horribly agitated and on the eve of executing my design, God arrested me by a severe illness which He sent me in the month of July, 1607. My father and mother sent immediately to fetch me and brought me to Paris. I attributed it to the intercession of the Apostle S. James my patron saint, whom

¹ *Relation . . . par la Mère Angélique de S. Jean, Mémoires pour servir . . .*, vol. i, p. 254.

I invoked at the time, that God preserved me from death. I was ill up to Michaelmas, September the 29th, receiving all human assistance in respect of the body and none at all for the soul. For in all that time there was neither Priest nor Curé nor Monk to speak to me of God. I saw only the doctors, and, as I appeared to be wholly worldly, no one was at pains to let me see any other persons than those of the world.

‘During this time our relatives, among others my uncle, M. Arnauld, Minister of Finance, and the one who was afterwards Field-marshal and Governor of Fort Louis near La Rochelle; my aunt, wife of the President de Druy, and many others, came to see me; and, as they were all covered with satin and velvet, and our other relatives were just as magnificently dressed and much adorned, that gave me pleasure; and I had a bodice secretly made with whalebone to give me a better figure, for I loved vanity, and the sickness of my body had not cured that of my soul. But this is what made me change my intention of leaving my Convent.

‘I reflected that my father and mother were showing me very great affection, especially my mother, who had had me put into her room and made a nurse sleep at the left side of my bed while she slept on the right. Her affection was so great that I never called the nurse but she anticipated her, whether day or night, and came to give me whatever I needed. These signs of tenderness and sincere affection, as well from my father as from my mother, won my heart. I reflected that I could not change my condition as Nun and Abbess without affording them the keenest distress they could receive, and, as they loved me so much, I could not make up my mind to give them this great pain. I reflected also that, although I had not been of age when I was made to take vows, I had yet known very well what I was doing and what I was promising; that I should be innocent in the sight of men but guilty before God, and that, after all, our Lord had shown me only too great honour in taking me so early for His bride. Thus, for fear of being ungrateful to my father and my mother, who had shown me so much affection, and unfaithful to Jesus Christ, to whom I had dedicated my body and my soul, I resolved to remain a Nun, and to have made openly a dress of white serge, quite simple, without whalebone, that I might continue in the modesty of a person who has taken the Veil.’¹

The affectionate parents were lamentably blind to their daughter’s character and treated her at this juncture with

¹ *Entretiens . . . avec M. le Maître, Mémoires pour servir . . .*, vol. ii, p. 255 seq.

a mistrust wholly unworthy of her integrity and eminent reasonableness, her mother suspecting her of girlish follies, while her father played her a turn which went near to spoil the whole matter. She related this also in old age to the nephew:—

‘ When I was very nearly quite well again, my mother, who, as a modest woman, kept constant watch upon her daughters, seeing that I was so lively and wide-awake,—as I was horribly—, became afraid lest the liberty which, according to the ordinary custom of Convents at that time, was allowed to men to enter our House, and the freedom of my disposition, should have led me to listen to some love-talk, and to enter into understanding with some man belonging to that neighbourhood, or coming there from Paris. So that she set out one day all on purpose and came here (to the Convent) to look through all my boxes and all my papers, and see if she could not find some letter that should point to some such intercourse. But my father, who had more confidence in my discretion than my mother, was good enough to tell me that my mother, seeing me so young and so free, was afraid lest I might have listened to some talk and had gone to Port Royal to see whether I had not received letters. Whereupon I replied with sincerity: *She will find nothing, her journey is thrown away so far as that is concerned.* And, as a fact, the fear I had of the judgements of God and of death, and the feeling of honour that was always alive in me, fortified by the example of all our family, which was very chaste and strongly opposed to all impurity, had made me always inaccessible to every temptation of this kind; although my lack of piety and the relaxation of my giddy and libertine life in such extreme youth, and the discourses I was accustomed to hear from our Bernardine Monks, who entertained me with nothing but follies, and with the diversions of Cîteaux and of Clairvaux, (the *good customs of the Order*, as they called them, where, they told me, “*paulme*” was played on Sundays and Feast-days,) might well have made those think the contrary who did not know the depths of my heart.

‘ But when I had turned fifteen, my father played me a clever trick which gave me extreme vexation, and which might have shaken me in my resolution of remaining a Religious, had not God sustained me. It was that he wrote, as I gathered from a line I read, a ratification of my vows, and presented it to me without having spoken about it, and said the same instant, “*My daughter, sign this paper.*” It was somewhat badly written, I believe on purpose that I might not have time or power to read it. I did not dare ask him what it was, such was the reverence I bore him. But, passing

my eyes down the writing, I read that *it was the ninth year*. Which showed me that it was a ratification of my vows made some seven years before. I signed this document, inwardly bursting with rage, without, however, expressing any of it to him; and God made me swallow my vexation in silence, excusing my father by the affection and respect I had for him. May God be eternally praised for it !¹

‘At the age of fifteen,’ the Mère Angélique told her nuns,² ‘though I scarcely prayed at all in set words, yet I had a constant prayer to God in my heart.’ At that age, again, she read the *Lives of the Saints*, intently and devoutly, ‘as they ought to be read;’ and at that same age,—just before the crisis, therefore, if we may take the record as exact—, in despair at her constant relapse into the same faults, she conceived the wish to be thrown into a dungeon and loaded with chains that she might be free from temptation. A deep, if occasional, piety had been present evidently in the turmoil of emotion which culminated, so fortunately, in a ‘double-tertian’ fever,—not strong enough, indeed, to withstand the growing distaste for the convent and the longing for the joys of womanhood, but ready, the thought of escape once overruled, to assume complete sway. In her mental conflict the issue was determined by filial affection, but that sentiment had, even then, a powerful auxiliary in her belief that she was in truth pledged to God. Presently filial affection had in its turn to relinquish the field to its ally.

¹ *Entretiens . . . avec M. le Maître, Mémoires pour servir . . .*, p. 258 seq.

² *Ib.*, p. 260.

CHAPTER II

'Conversion' of the Mère Angélique.—The beginnings of reform at Port Royal.

ANGÉLIQUE returned to her convent still very weak after her illness, in spite of a period of convalescence in her father's country house at Andilly, which she loved and found so beautiful that she marvelled at 'the folly of people who build country houses and leave them empty while they stay in town'.¹ She returned acquiescing in her lot; she was touched at the warmth of her nuns' welcome and responded to their affection. The winter passed in invalid languor; she desired to spend the ensuing Lent as befitted the season and asked one of her nuns for a book of devotion. The work given her kindled to quicker life the latent religious feeling, but the final 'conversion' awaited a more concentrated stimulus. The moment, however, was at hand which was to change the girl's forced and grievous acquiescence into glad acceptance; the close of Lent saw, in the language of Port Royal, the 'moment of grace' for the Mère Angélique.

Narrative of the Mère Angélique (continued)

'At Carnival (1608) there were the usual festivities, but in private and without secular persons. As Lent had come and I was stronger, I wished to take to reading again, and consulted the Nun who had charge of me what book to read, for I found all the works of devotion tedious, and yet, because of Lent, I dared not read any other. She told me that, during my absence in Paris, some Capuchin friars had been to preach, and had given a book of Meditations, which she liked and which would perhaps please me. She gave it me and, though it was very simple, I liked it as much as she did, and it gave me some devotion.

'Some days after there came a Capuchin friar, close on nightfall, and proposed to preach. I was very glad, for I always liked to hear preaching, which took place so seldom

¹ *Entretiens . . . avec M. le Maître*, Mémoires pour servir . . ., vol. ii, p. 261.

that, when I first came, no one had preached for more than thirty years, save some five or six times at Professions of Nuns. But after my arrival they used to send, on the four great feasts of the year, for pupils from the Bernardines, who preached so lamentably that the sermons were an occasion of sin, through the mockery we made of them.

‘We went to the sermon of this Capuchin, night as it was. During this sermon God touched me in such a manner that from that moment I felt more happy at being a Nun than I had before been unhappy; and I do not know what I would not have done for God had He continued in me the movement that His grace gave me. He showed me another grace, which was: not to speak to this Capuchin in private, as I had thought of doing, in order to communicate to him my good intentions and ask his guidance. For God in His goodness made me reflect that this man was too young for me, who was only sixteen and a half, and that I ought not to apply to him but wait for some other. I contented myself with going to thank him with one of the Sisters, and it was a great Providence of God for me. For I learnt afterwards that this man was excessively disordered, that he had committed great follies in religious houses, and that some years later he apostatized.

‘I remained strongly touched by the desire to serve God, though with very little light as to what I ought to do for my conscience. Only I prayed to God the very best I could. I continued thus up to Pentecost, when there came another Capuchin to preach, who was old and of the severest aspect that ever one could see. At once I thought that this was he whom I needed, and I did not fail to disclose to him my desires, in the which he confirmed me. But he took the advantage I had given him, to preach so severely that he gave offence to certain of the Sisters, especially to the Prioress who, since she had a well-regulated mind, and had always been a careful observer of the Rule as then observed, did not think she had need of any further reform. She began to say that this Monk would put it into my head to make a great reform; that I was very young, that I should tire of it and that all this would end only in disorder. I thought her quite right to have no confidence in me, and that, since I was not wise enough to govern a House and make a reform, I should do much better to give up my post, and to go and become Nun in some good and well-ordered Convent.

‘A few days after, this Capuchin returned and brought with him another holy man, called the Père Pacifique, very aged, who was not a preacher, and who had already visited us once before. He came first to the parlour and told me that Père Bernard (as the one I have spoken of was called) had

told him he had won all here, and that reform was about to be established. Whereupon I told him things were not so forward, and I repeated to him the discourse of the Prioress, which I found very sensible; and that it made me resolve to think only of my salvation and to retire in order to be simple Nun. This good Father approved of my purpose, and on the other's arrival he told him my resolution, whereupon the latter fell into great anger and threatened me that he would go in search of my father who would certainly prevent my leaving. I had so great a dread of this, that my fear, and the belief I had that I ought to obey this Monk, made me promise that I would do nothing but what he wished.

'He continued to come here frequently from Pentecost up to the month of September. He preached and spoke to five or six of the Sisters, who at once sided with me, desiring all that I desired. The others made no commotion, nor ever failed in respect to me, and I conversed with them as gently as I could, caressing them even more than those who wished for reform. For I believed that those to whom God had given this good will were bound to sustain the others and set them an example of patience and humility. It was true that those who opposed the reform had always been more orderly, devout, and modest in their dress than the others; which gave occasion to the Prioress to say that those who had indulged in vanities did well to reform themselves and that, as for those who had not, they had nothing to change. Whereupon I reproached her with her private possessions, so strictly forbidden by the Rule, and she said that she had nothing that I did not know of or that she would dispose of without leave: which was true. She added that the indulgence which was practised, of leaving to every one their little possessions, was more useful and convenient for the Abbesses than for the Nuns, and that I did not know what cares I should burden myself with in establishing community; that each was careful of what she had, but that so soon as all should be in common, I should see that none would think of being careful. (Experience has taught me this is only too true, for cupidity is more active and more powerful than charity, which is a ground of great humiliation; and it is certain that this evil is the reason that Abbesses, to escape care, and from avarice, have permitted these appropriations.) I replied to the Prioress that one ought not to pay attention to all that, since the Rule required everything to be in common. I did not, however, urge her, because I saw clearly that one must have patience with this Sister.

'But the Capuchin Father insisted upon making regulations, good in truth, but not adapted to the state of mind of my

Sisters, and, do what I could, he would take them, as coming from me, to an Abbé of the Order, Vicar-General to M. de Cîteaux. I told him that all that would happen would be that this Abbé would go to my father and would do in all this only what might please him ; and the event was as I said.

‘Meanwhile harvest-time arrived, when my father wished me to go and see him in his house in the country : much to my embarrassment, since I now dreaded this journey as much as I had formerly desired it. I spoke about it to the Capuchin Father, who told me I might go, because in truth I was not a professed Nun, and in order also to persuade my father to send to Rome that he might have new Rules and absolution for the false understanding they had given, saying that I was seventeen when I was only nine. I went accordingly ; and directly I arrived I learnt from my father that this Abbé, to whom the Capuchin had taken the articles of reform, had been to see him, not only that he might do whatsoever pleased him, but also to tell him that the Capuchins would ruin me body and mind by their austerities ; that they were mere hypocrites, who sought under pretext of reform to get footing in our House in order to make there collections which would stand them in the stead of a good farm. He had no difficulty in convincing my father, who readily gave him full credence, especially as to the fear that the austerities would kill me. And he told me all this with such vexation that it made him ill, and he told me that if he died of this illness I should be the cause of his death ; which touched me so keenly that I promised him never to see the Capuchin ; and I was so afflicted at seeing all I had foreseen happen, that I fell into a quartan fever.

‘My father learnt further from the Nun provided for me in my youth, who was strongly opposed to the reform and still more to this Capuchin, the details of his violent proceedings, and the dissatisfaction of the Prioress ; and he wrote at once to the latter, begging her to be at ease and assuring her that I would do nothing contrary to her advice. He was attached to her, believing, as indeed was true, that he was under obligation to her for having governed the House so well in tranquillity during my childhood.

‘Some days after, that is to say, on October the 18th, 1608, I returned to the Convent, very sad at seeing so many hindrances to my desires, and with the resolution to do all I could to serve God, but without doing anything that could anger my father. On the Feast of All Saints, my father, who had arranged with the Vicar-General that he should send, as before, pupils (*écoliers*) to preach, so that no more Capuchins should come, sent one, and it was the will of God that he in-

clined to Reform. He preached pretty well, and among other things he spoke to us strongly on the eighth beatitude, 'Blessed are those who suffer persecution for righteousness' sake.' It chanced that a good girl who waited on me, called Marie Baron (since a Nun, to whom was given the name of S. Paulin for her name in religion), and whom God had touched with us, said to me: "If you wished, Madame, you could be among those blessed who suffer persecution for righteousness' sake." I rebuffed her harshly, telling her she was very bold to say that to me. Nevertheless her words penetrated my heart, and God made use of her goodness to cause me to think seriously of satisfying God rather than my father. I said however nothing, and I would not see the Capuchin, who returned; but that was because I was vexed at his proceeding, and did not believe him capable of helping us.

'The following Advent, God, whose mercy beheld me, brought about a jubilee. Straightway I thought of preparing myself that I might join in it, and of making a general confession, which I had never made, nor a particular one of any worth. The first thought that came to me was that, whatever might happen, I would live henceforth as a Nun, and that I would not confess the faults I had committed merely to begin them over again. As we could not venture to think of having any other Confessor than a Monk of the Order, I asked for the one who had preached on All Saints' Day to hear my confession. The others did the same, and he confirmed us greatly in the purpose of embracing reform.

'I continued always to be very sad, not knowing where to begin in order to gain over the Prioress and some others of the senior Nuns. At length one day in Lent (1609), a Nun who loved me very much, and who indeed greatly feared God, begged me with another Sister to come into her cell, where she said to me that she was in distress at seeing me in such a great state of melancholy, and that she begged me to tell her what was the matter. I acknowledged to her that it was because I could not satisfy the desire I had for reform; and immediately they said that, if that was the ground of my melancholy, they would do whatever I pleased rather than grieve me, and the day was fixed on which all should be put in common.

'The Day of S. Benedict I went to the Chapter for that purpose, and all accepted it with goodwill. I permitted only the Prioress and one other to keep certain small articles of clothing, which they brought directly after to the common stock, where I had all our belongings put also.

'The great difficulty was to establish enclosure, since for that we had to deal with secular persons, and above all with

my father and mother, who would not by any manner of means submit to this law. My mother among other things said that it was necessary for her to enter to see how I behaved; and she was right in a manner (for it is true that she had been very useful and even necessary in my youth): and, as I was still at that time only seventeen and a half, she had not over-much confidence in me.

‘I received word that my father would come in a few days during the vacation. I told the Monk who had helped us, and whom we had asked for as Confessor; and when I consulted him to know what I ought to do to prevent my father and mother from entering, he said I should sin mortally if I did not shut the door against my father when he came; which made me resolve to do it. But to avoid giving my father this pain, I wrote to my mother that I implored her humbly to dissuade him from coming, because I could not in conscience let him enter. She told him, but he could not conceive that I should have the hardihood, so that he did not give up coming. I refused to open, which put him in such wrath that he proposed to return home on the very instant, assuring me that he would never see me again in his life, that he had an extreme sorrow at seeing my mind was being perverted, and that he advised me at least to be very prudent. I was in such grief at seeing him in this frame of mind that I thought to suffocate; which touched him so much that he was pacified and consented to see me in the parlour. But it happened that this Monk, on hearing it said that I was ill, came and presented himself, and on my father’s accusing him of having given me this counsel, he answered harshly; which angered my father again the more. Observing also that he’ (the Monk) ‘was very young, it displeased him, and he contrived that M. de Cîteaux should withdraw him, for which I was not sorry; for I saw clearly that, although he had the fear of God, he had not everything that was requisite for us, and it was time that he left.’

With this refusal of the door to her father, the Mère Angélique had won the field, and overcome the external opposition to her project of reform. The incident, which she recounts so quietly and in such brief outline, was known in the annals of the convent as the *jour du guichet*. Fuller details of the scene are preserved. As the expectant nuns gathered within, the young Abbess, touched with the sense of parental injustice, let fall to them: ‘It is good that they should make me a Nun against my will, and, now that I wish to save my soul in my calling, they will not let me!’ She went alone

to the door, begging her father to enter the little parlour adjoining, where she could speak to him. He refused; her mother reproached her loudly with ingratitude; her brother d'Andilly, the eldest son, at that time a youth of twenty, took a still higher tone, calling her a monster of ingratitude,¹ a parricide who would have the death of her father to answer for before God, and finally clamouring for the nuns and appealing to them to open the door to their benefactor. One at least, Dame Morel by name, who had taken but half-heartedly to reform, would gladly have opened, and cried, 'What a shame not to admit M. Arnauld!'; and even the poor women cleaning in the court took up the cry of ingratitude against Madame de Port Royal, who treated her father in such a manner.

The noise had no effect on the Abbess. M. Arnauld resolved on a stratagem, and demanded that at least his two other daughters, Agnès and the little Marie, who were in the convent, should be sent out to him, thinking, the door once opened, he would have entrance. But Angélique, with complete presence of mind, sent the young girls out by the little door of the church, so that they were with their father without their manner of exit being seen. Agnès, as her father complained to her of her sister's conduct, replied that she was in the right, and was doing only what she was obliged, and what the Council of Trent had commanded. 'Upon my word,' interrupted the fiery M. d'Andilly, 'here is another, who comes citing the Canons and the Councils.' Yet two more of the daughters were present, the eldest, Mme le Maître, already but unhappily married, and a younger sister, Anne. These unwilling witnesses, who had come in the family party, were torn in two, feeling for the distress both of their father and of Angélique.²

At length M. Arnauld ordered the horses to be put to, and prepared for departure. Only he consented first, at the reiterated prayers of his daughter, to enter the parlour where

¹ *Relation . . . par la Mère Angélique de S. Jean*, Mémoires pour servir . . . , vol. i, p. 44 seq.

² 'Il n'y avait en tout cela que les deux sœurs, Madame le Maître et Mademoiselle Anne qui ne disaient mot, étant également touchées de la peine de M. Arnauld et de celle de la Mère Angélique, qu'elles savaient bien ne pas faire ce qu'elle faisait, sans qu'elle en souffrit beaucoup et qu'elle ne fit un horrible effort à son naturel.' *Ib.*, p. 47.

she could talk to him in the prescribed fashion, from the other side of the grille. Then it was that, as he spoke of his affection, renouncing all future interest in her but commending her to take care of her health, she 'thought she should suffocate',—that she fell, as a fact, into a dead faint. Her father, separated from her by the grille, called in vain for the nuns to come and succour her. They only retreated at the sound of his cries, not gathering their purport, and when at length they ventured near and restored their Abbess to consciousness, the father, all alarm, had forgotten his wrath. He consented to remain that day at least at Port Royal, and conversed peaceably with his daughter as she lay on a couch close up to the grille. The young monk, ill-advised enough to make his appearance at this moment, was the scapegoat in the matter. For the rest, a compromise was arrived at. M. Arnauld obtained a special permission to enter the gardens and the buildings, with the reserve of the nuns' actual precincts, that he might continue his benevolent care of the 'same. Mme Arnauld was permitted to enter at will; but for long she scrupled to avail herself of the leave, because she had vowed in her anger never to see her daughter again. Fortunately she was present shortly after at a sermon where the preacher declared that vows made in anger were not binding, and she then hastened without delay to the convent.

The 'moment of grace' had been final and decisive for the Mère Angélique. The strong emotions of her adolescence, denied, at the bidding of filial duty, all other outlet, found a home in her chosen calling. Her heart kindled, as the unworthy monk set forth the life of Jesus, with the love of poverty, obedience and humility, the traditional marks of Christ, the wedding-garments of His bride. The child of seven had realized the presence of God in the skies as she knelt to ask forgiveness in the courtyard, the child-abbess at her installation could forget the crowd and bustle, in her untrained devotion, as she took the Sacrament; the devout strain, so long suppressed, came now to the front, and the girl entering upon womanhood set the full strength of her affections upon the service of Christ. By the grace of God—or, shall we say, by one of human-nature's miracles?—the uncongenial

path, once accepted by the will, opened out into a wide and fair prospect. Henceforth she esteemed herself happier to be a nun than previously she had felt herself unhappy. It was no sudden change but the turn of a balance, the moment that illumined her choice with happiness.

Angélique's first and strong impulse was, not to reform her own nunnery, but to quit her post, hateful both for its unlawful acquirement and for its worldly dignity, and to become a simple nun, the still humbler lay-sister if it might be, in a strict and distant convent.¹ The dread of her father's opposition kept her at Port Royal, but from that moment until, twenty years later, she was able in part to realize it, she nursed some similar hope.

Meanwhile her new zeal could run at least in the familiar channel of personal austerity. She sought to dominate the flesh, rising at night to pray; dropping, it is said, hot wax upon her arms. Taxed in later life with these self-inflicted penances, contrary to her mature theory of discipline, she excused herself: 'What would you have? All seemed good at that time.' In the days when the dress was distasteful to her, she yet had scorned the paltry expedients of the nuns to better and beautify it; now she would bring it back in all points to the primitive garment of poverty and penance. She gave up cuffs, so that the rough material took the skin off her wrists;² she left off the linen underwear in general use, but forbidden by the Rule; she slept in her day-garments. These personal reforms, already practised when she paid her last visit to Andilly, had subjected her to the fire of family criticism. A maid reported the absence of linen; there was a rumour of fleas. 'Did she think piety consisted in dirt?' she was asked. 'Her austerities would ruin her health.'³ Her constant defence was the Rule of her Order,—the Order that, after all, she had not in the first instance chosen.

The young Abbess had embraced with all her heart the calling of a nun and the ideal embodied in her Rule. But the question before her was not that of professing or not

¹ *Entretiens . . . avec M. le Maître*, Mémoires pour servir . . . , vol. ii, p. 263.

² *Relation de la Mère Marie de Sainte-Magdeleine* du Fargis, loc. cit., vol. ii, p. 408.

³ *Relation . . . de la Mère Angélique de S. Jean*, loc. cit., vol. i. p. 32.

professing, but of practising or not practising what she already had professed. It is characteristic of the Mère Angélique that, while a nun in all truth and simplicity, adopting the nun's ideal of poverty, obedience and humility, she had always, in support of her ideal, arguments that reach beyond convent walls. She loved, indeed, poverty, because Christ was poor, because 'Blessed are the poor'; but she marvelled also that any one could take pleasure in superfluity while so many lacked food and clothing. And first and foremost this argument of integrity, conformity of practice to profession. There was much to be said in favour of the relaxed practice of convents, becoming as they were a secular institution, a quite tolerable refuge for the superfluous woman. But there was nothing at all in favour of the union of that secular purpose with the elder religious profession and rule, a glaring anomaly tending, as do all such anomalies, to the lowering of the standard of national honesty.

The principle of integrity, simple truth and sincerity, was upheld eventually by Port Royal in the teeth of 'persecution'; it was now Angélique's guide in the reform of her own person and of her convent. 'Had I to make a new Order,' she said later, to François de Sales, 'I should perhaps make it less strict; but since the Rules are already made, I think one should conform to them so far as it is possible.' She said to him, as her nephew reports it: 'My Father, in reforming my Abbey, I did not think I had anything else to do than to return to the Rule which had been neglected, and to restore things to the same state in which they were before the relaxation and deformation. It seems to me that there is no need to subtilize and to refine in these matters, and that one has only to restore the ancient observances and the ancient spirit of the Order.' And she assured him, with regard to that nice question of underclothing, that cleanliness was as possible with the regulation serge as with linen, the former requiring only more care and frequent bleaching.¹

The conquest of the Prioress and other recalcitrant nuns was the fruit, as already seen, of their affection for the young Abbess rather than of participation in her spirit. They were not touched by grace to a kindred zeal, but their hearts were

¹ *Entretiens... avec M. le Maître*, Mémoires pour servir..., vol. ii, p. 306.

won to do her pleasure. She displayed truly in her treatment of them the human qualities most deserving of affection and characteristic of her large nature ; an eminent reasonableness, that could see the force of their arguments and did not resent their natural doubt of her steadfastness,—this in rare union with warmheartedness and keen sensibilities and with a temperament of strong energy and activity. The reform was accepted by several of these original nuns against the grain therefore ; in one instance it was refused, in another taken with reserve.

A nun who had been child-pupil under the child-abbess, and was a novice at this moment of reform, has recorded her memories of the Mère Angélique.¹ She mentions how constant Angélique was in prayer at this period before the nuns had yielded to her wishes. ‘She scarcely stirred from her oratory, praying a long while before speaking to the Nuns in whom she met with opposition.’ According to this report, it was the Prioress herself who, moved by the girl’s sadness, promised to accomplish her will.

‘In all things that she established, she observed such discretion and charity, that in general her will was accepted readily. When something a Nun had in her cell, such as a rosary of some beauty or the like, was brought to her, she received it with very great joy, and displayed as much pleasure in seeing that these little niceties were given up as if she had received some great present.

‘A deaf and dumb Sister, whom it had not been proposed to include in the reform, gathered what was going forward and brought spontaneously her small possessions to the common store. This Sister became thenceforward as indifferent in her dress as she had before been dainty, and developed great piety and zeal in correcting her faults.’

Another of the original nuns, on the contrary, declined reform altogether, declaring she had been made a nun against her will. They asked of her only to live with them in peace, but could not obtain it. The young Abbess came to a trial of will with this Sister, who, having on some occasion given ‘great scandal’ to all the community, refused to do penance for it. She preferred to be deprived of the Sacrament on the Feast of Ascension Day. ‘Our Mother left her in this state until Pentecost. Then she called her to the Chapter and spoke

¹ *Relation de la Sœur Anne de S. Augustin Garnier, Mémoires pour servir . . .*, vol. ii, p. 424 seq.

to her so strongly that she constrained her to do what she desired. I am incapable,' continues the Sœur Garnier, 'of reporting the things which she said; but I remember that she made the whole community weep. The care she took of this poor Sister is incredible.' Neither firmness nor long-suffering were, however, of avail to change the unwilling spirit; and Angélique permitted this nun's translation to another, presumably unreformed, convent, where she eventually died, 'with a great sense of her faults, so it was reported.'

Another nun, the senior of all, took very hardly to reform, having peculiar aversion to the community of goods.

'The Mother would not constrain her. But some considerable time after, this Nun resolved of her own accord to put in common all she possessed, with the reserve of a little garden which she had in private and could not resolve to part with. During the Mother Angélique's absence at Andilly, she had made acquaintance with a Capuchin Friar' (it will be remembered certain Capuchins had then visited Port Royal), 'to whom she was greatly attached. He came to see her at this time, and, before he had spoken to her, our Mother informed him that this good Sister had put all in common with reserve of the garden. He did all he could to make her give it up, without any success. He went so far as to go on his knees to her; but that served only to make her more angry. Some time after, when her anger had passed, she asked the Mother Angélique's permission to write to this Capuchin, which was accorded. She brought her the letter open, but the Mother would not read it, and told her to close it herself, and that it should be sent safely. The Nun accordingly closed her letter and enclosed in it the key of the garden. This good Father came to bring the key to the Mother Angélique. I used to see him' (it is always the Sœur Garnier who reports), 'when he came, because his family was in intimate friendship with my father and mother. This time, he said to me: "Did I not tell you, my daughter, that Dame Morel would yield in the end? She has sent word to me that she was convinced of the goodness of Madame, because in spite of all her opposition she did not fail to speak to her with such gentleness that it filled her with confusion, so that she could no longer resist her. She has sent me the key of her garden to give to her. I must own to you that since she has won over the spirit of that Nun, I can say it is a miracle."' '

Even before her conversion the Mère Angélique had been struck by the pettiness and tenacity of the spirit of possession

nursed in nuns by the prevailing indulgence, as in the case of a Sister who had chosen to abstain from Communion at Easter, rather than acknowledge to the Abbess some disposal of her belongings which she had made without leave. Her ripper experience taught her that the same spirit may reappear in convents where community is strictly enforced, in the form of pride of possession for the community, in rivalry of church ornaments and the like. She herself was from the first as careful that the community should be poor as that the nuns should have all in common, and she cherished all outward signs of such poverty. She rejected the cups of faience which her mother had given the convent, substituting earthenware mugs. She thought out, and made with her own hands, a dress of the required coarseness and simplicity. In the later days of the convent, which seemed to her to show signs of degeneracy, she recalled this first garb of poverty, the coarseness of the material, how it was made all of pieces—as many as forty—and her delight in it. She loved it so much that she began to fear it was an idol.¹ She bade her nuns note that their Rule of S. Benedict had a detail lacking to that of S. Francis, inasmuch as it enjoined that the dress should be of the lowest possible price. She persisted all her life in this minute care for poverty, telling her nuns that if, after her death, they came to desire superfluities, she believed she should return from her grave. They would deserve, she said, to be abandoned of God, if ever they abandoned the spirit of poverty.

The young Abbess enforced also from the first that other conventual virtue, Silence, particularly during the hours of service. She caused a little bell to be rung at the close of each service, so that the patients in the infirmary should know when to break the silence in which they shared.²

She exhorted her nuns to charity and mutual forbearance; and she herself set them the example in her unceasing care for their bodies as for their souls. She was as careful they should want for no necessities as that they should desire no superfluities. She kept in her heart the hope of one day laying

¹ *Entretiens ou Conférences de la Révérende Mère Marie-Angélique Arnould*, À Bruxelles, 1757, pp. 37-8.

² *Relation de la Sœur Anne de S. Augustin* Garnier, Mémoires pour servir . . . , vol. ii, p. 429.

down her ill-gotten dignity, but, till that should be possible, she strove to fill her post as Mother and as servant to the community. The example for her was that of her Lord washing the feet of His disciples. When the nuns were ill she was their nurse; she shared at all times in the humblest tasks of the household. The Sœur Garnier, from whom most of these details are drawn, was one of the first to experience the peculiar care of which instances abound in the later narratives. This Sister was, as already observed, a novice at this time of reform, and while still a novice she developed some malady or received some hurt in the leg. She did all she could to conceal it, fearing it would prevent her reception by the community. But the wound festered and, finding herself obliged to make it known, she went to the Abbess with tears in her eyes. Angélique was moved with so much compassion that she promised no one should know. She herself dressed the wound in secret until it was cured, taking the ointment from the cell of a nun who had also a bad leg, and she promised the novice that it should be of no prejudice to her.

During those same first years of reform, a nun received as guest on her way from one convent to another was amazed at the Mother Angélique's conduct, and used to say she had never known what it meant to be a nun, and that one must come to Port Royal to learn it. She wrote home to her convent:

‘Mme de Port Royal takes such care of her Nuns that she herself carries the wood into the dormitories to warm them, and she has so much charity for those who are ill, that it is as though she were herself the nurse. They have put me in the Novitiate, where the young Nuns take as much care of me as if I were their own Sister.’

The Abbess took upon herself, for a time at least, and failing any nun to whom she could confide it, the charge of the Novitiate, instructing the novices with great earnestness, and recommending silence and respect for the nuns. She also held chapters, but long after, she told her nuns, it was with pain and difficulty in those years that she was Abbess by wrongful appointment. Subsequently, when she was re-elected Abbess legitimately by the nuns, she had no trouble in speaking to



THE CHAPTER AT PORT ROYAL DES CHAMPS AND THE 'CONFERENCE' OF
NUNS IN THE PORTION OF THE GARDEN CALLED THE 'SOLITUDE'

From engravings by Madeleine Hortemel

the community, trusting that God would put words into her mouth.¹

Small as was the community, the charge of Abbess, thus understood, was no light one for so young a girl. After two or three years she fell suddenly ill (in 1613), and was like to die. As the nuns assembled at her bedside, she spoke to them of her grief at not completing what seemed to her necessary for a full reform, assuring them that if they were faithful to God He would not abandon them. 'As she saw the whole community moved to tears, she gathered all the strength of her feebleness and repeated out loud the prayer of S. Martin: "*Lord, if I am still necessary to Thy people, I do not refuse labour; Thy will be done.*"'²

The Mère Angélique recovered and reform went forward. The nuns had now all accepted it cheerfully and some at least shared her zeal. All shared in the simplicity of life, and in common labour. Turn and turn about, the nuns took a week in the kitchen, obeying the lay-sister who was cook as simply as though they had been novices. Something of the light-hearted charm of all such voluntary returns to the simpler life of human fellowship, whether in a nunnery or at Brook Farm, hangs about Port Royal in these early days. The delight in common labour is here, however, seasoned by the thought of a higher service; the natural charm of simplicity is tempered, perhaps refined, by its ideal merit. And that flame of the ideal spiritual life was nursed, not by labour only, but by abstinence and penance. Port Royal was a nunnery. Hand in hand with zeal for labour went the fervour for self-mortification. The spirit of Port Royal filled the accustomed channels; only, filling, it was not exhausted in them. They were here channels that led to the wide sea of charity. And, better check even than the common-sense which was not lacking, the zeal for penance had to pass the test of sincerity, and approve itself by real change of character. Penance, at Port Royal, was never a substitute for amendment.

¹ V. *Relation de la Mère Marie-Dorothée de l'Incarnation* Le Conte, Mémoires pour servir . . . , vol. ii, p. 424, and *Lettres de la Mère Angélique*, vol. i, pp. 594-5.

² *Relation de la Sœur Anne de S. Augustin* Garnier, loc. cit., vol. ii, p. 429.

The profound care for sincerity saved the Mère Angélique from another danger of convents. Daughter of the Church, she accepted without question the authenticated visions of the Saints; her own fervours tended to 'inwardness', and to a spirituality that, without this counteractive, might well have taken such mystic form. But the point on which her mind dwelt was the frequency of delusion in these matters, the trifling of the human spirit. Her early prayer was accordingly one strange on the lips of a nun: 'Save me from visions.' She did not aspire after the visions of the Saints, she dreaded the delusions of the Devil; and for herself she desired only an intermediate form of ecstasy, the sole legitimate one to desire, as she told her nuns in ripe old age,—a certain 'silence of the heart before God.'¹

'God,' Angélique also told her nuns,—for all the reverend gravity with which her sayings are reported we catch at times a turn of the Mother's caustic humour—, heard her prayer most effectively, and she had no waking visions, and, as for those which came to her in sleep, she held them all for dreams or reverie. One of her early dreams, however, made so deep an impression upon her that she told it to the nuns in after-life, and we retail it here as a dream-allegory revealing the hidden movement of her mind.

She saw a church, exceeding beautiful, descend from the heavens upon a high hill and enclose a multitude of people standing upon the summit. She was at once moved to go also to the church, and as she toiled up the hill, she said, 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.' ('I did not know at the time,' she told her nuns, 'that these words were in the Bible.') As she reached the church, she had a vision, but of disembodied beauty,—the vision of God, she believed it; and straightway she said to herself, 'I have not deserved what I see. I must return to work and fight before daring to hope for it.' Upon which, she awoke.²

¹ *Entretiens ou Conférences de la Révérende Mère Marie-Angélique Arnauld*, p. 252; cf. also p. 378.

² *Relation de la Mère Marie-Dorothée de l'Incarnation* Le Conte, *Mémoires pour servir . . .*, vol. ii, pp. 421-2.

CHAPTER III

The Mère Angélique's directors, and her sisters.—The spirit of Port Royal.

THE young monk, of uncompromising zeal, was, as we have seen, ejected by M. Arnauld from the convent with his daughter's private approval :—

Narrative of the Mère Angélique (continued)

‘ This Monk had helped two Nuns of S. Antoine des Champs (Mme de Nouveau and Mme de Louviers) to obtain permission to come and live with us, as they greatly desired so soon as they learnt that reform was being established. One of them (the Mère de Louviers) had been assisted by a worthy secular Priest (M. Boucher) who lived in Paris, and who had been with the Capuchins, but had left while Novice because of infirmity. This worthy Priest used to visit Haute Bruyère (a neighbouring Priory), and on his way thither stopped here to see this Nun. I also saw him, and he seemed to me very good, as indeed he was. I told him the straits I was in for want of assistance ; and he promised to speak for me to an old Capuchin, who was very prudent, and of great repute (it was the Father Archangel of Pembroke), who had helped very successfully in the reform of the Abbeys of Montvilliers and of S. Paul near Beauvais.

‘ He spoke to this good Father, who came to see us, and who was a Monk truly wise and discreet. He was English and of high birth, and he had left his country for the Catholic religion, his father being Catholic. As one of his friends was surprised while hearing mass and taken prisoner, he took alarm ; so much so that he fled and came to Paris, and soon after, while still only twenty years of age, he became a Capuchin. Had this worthy Father not been nurtured upon the study of the Casuists, he would have lacked nothing to be a perfect Monk ; but since he had studied nothing else, that had done him great harm. Nevertheless he was better for us at that time than any other we could have had, and his counsels were proportioned to what we could do.

‘ My father and my mother approved him highly, because

he was known and esteemed by Mme la Marquise de Maignelai,¹ whom they wholly esteemed and honoured, and who answered for his prudence and discretion, and that he would never permit me to do anything contrary to my health, for which indeed he had only too much regard. The first piece of advice which he gave me, and which I have found very useful, was never to let our Sisters speak to any Monk whatsoever, not even to the Capuchins, not though they were to preach like angels; for that did not give them the gift of directing well, which is very rare; he promised to see them when he came. As there reigned in our Convent an excessive ignorance, none of our Sisters knowing the Catechism, no more than I, he begged M. Gallot, Doctor, who was Confessor to the Carmelites, old and very discreet, to come and see us from time to time, in order to preach and teach the Catechism to our pupils, whereat everybody attended. He had also an extraordinary gift for the Confessional. Further the Father Archangel begged a worthy Feuillant, a friend of his (Dom Eustache de S. Paul), to come and see us. He was a very good Monk, and had more knowledge than any one. It turned out that he was son of one of my late grandfather's great friends, known and loved by my father and my mother, who were very pleased to see me in the hands of these persons, of whose discretion they were well satisfied. For in truth, and with justice, they feared everything at my age, which was still only eighteen. Since these persons were liked by my father, for whom the General had an affection, the Monks could not complain of their coming, so that we were at peace, but always at great straits for the ordinary Confessor, who had to be drawn from those of the Order. I inquired everywhere in order to find a good one, and I could not meet with what we needed. They gave me everyone I asked for, and always I was deceived.

'The one I had found here, who was very ignorant, proposed to depart when he saw us reformed, saying he was not capable of conducting us. The one we had next was this young Monk, whom my father expelled; and after that one who was really a little mad, which made him deliver what he knew in so ridiculous a manner that he was a laughing-stock for us, and an affliction at the same time, to see ourselves reduced to such persons for the administration of the Sacraments.

¹ The Marquise de Maignelai was one of the leading *Dames de la Charité*, who formed a benevolent society in Paris in the early seventeenth century. The Cardinal de Retz, who was her nephew, made use of her charity to curry favour with the people in preparation for the Fronde,—so he narrates in his *Mémoires*.

I remember one of the Sisters at that time was thought to be dying, and he gave her Extreme Unction and desired to preach, which he did at such length and in such a manner that we were all in distress for the patient and for ourselves. Finally his mind grew so weak, that it was necessary to dismiss him and begin the search over again for another.

We were told of one who was said to be the best Monk of his House. He was granted to us, and we sent to fetch him. He came, and, because he made pretence to love reform and all the worthy Fathers who came to see us, of whom he was not jealous, I took, to please him, two of his great-nephews as he wished; and that seemed the best in the world for peace, which was all I sought from such persons. But at the end of some years, through the fidelity of two Sisters, I discovered things which showed me that this apparent shepherd was in reality a wolf. I got rid of him. I had one after who was equally worthless, but in a manner less dangerous for the Sisters.

At last, not knowing what to do, it occurred to me to say to a chaplain we had (who was called afterwards Dom Jean Catois, and became Abbé de la Charité), who was very sensible, and had the fear of God, that if he had the wish to be a Monk, he would show us great kindness; that, nevertheless, I did not dare to give him this advice, or to beg this of him, but that I begged him to consult Father Eustache. The latter approved of his turning Monk, seeing that he was disposed to it, not in order to return here to us after his Profession, unless he should be commanded to, but from love of the calling. He who had given him the inclination was M. l'Abbé de la Charmoye (M. Mauger), whose acquaintance we had made on occasion of the Mother Agnès' Profession, which was in 1612. For in order to make a professed Nun, we were obliged to obtain permission of M. de Cîteaux, and to choose an Abbé of the Order.

Since we had heard much good of M. de la Charmoye, we begged him to come and profess her. He was a true Monk, had a veritable charity, and did not know the meaning of self-interest or jealousy. He took a great liking to this House and sympathized with the difficulties we sustained in the Order. He received the Chaplain of whom I have spoken, let him pass his Novitiate with him, and, after his Profession, sent him back. But he did not make him into so good a Monk as himself, and little by little he (the ex-chaplain) became like the others. He served us, however, for some years very charitably according to his small lights; and the best thing about him was that he liked those who helped us.

We arranged so as to have M. de la Charmoye as Vicar; which was a great benefit because of his true goodness. But,

to tell the truth, he had all the qualities of a good Monk, but not of a Superior. Nevertheless we were happy to have him, and we could have had no better at that time than this good Father, if we could have chosen among all those whom we then knew.'

The Mère Angélique's search after a Director on whom to lay the burden of her authority, and even for a Confessor fit for the ordinary duties of such a post, proved thus a long training in the knowledge of persons. Her judgement, as later events show, did not become impeccable, but it was from the first too sound and clear to be easily overruled, even by her great desire to yield obedience. Many years passed before she came in contact with any master-mind whose aspirations could mate with hers, and on whose force of character and intellect she could rely.

The judgements which, in her reminiscent talks with her nephew, she passed upon the directors of this earlier period, show how keen and untrammelled, and how involuntarily self-reliant, was the intellect of the young Abbess. She gives, too, in these reminiscences, some further details of interest:—

'One of the Directors who helped me,' she told her nephew,¹ 'more than any other at the first, was the Father Archangel, Capuchin, who showed me an extraordinary kindness, for which I tried to be not ungrateful. And since I took pains to assist him in his temporal necessities, and often sent, to Meudon or elsewhere that I knew he was going, some very simple victuals such as bread, beef or mutton, he used to say laughing: "You are ill styled Mme de Port Royal, your true name is Mme de Cœur Royal." He was a man of excellent intellect, with a venerable and imposing mien, worthy of his high birth.

'He was English, son of the Earl of Pembroke (*le Comte de Pembroke*²), a Catholic, who had obtained permission, on yearly payment of twelve hundred crowns, to have a secret chapel where he alone, but not his children, could hear mass. It was in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, of whom this Father several times spoke to me as a virgin in name, since she never

¹ *Entretiens . . . avec M. le Maître*, Mémoires pour servir . . ., vol. ii, p. 292 seq.

² The dates would make him a son of the second Earl of Pembroke and 'Sidney's sister'; but his name is not preserved in English annals, nor was that Earl of Pembroke reputed a Catholic.

had married, but in reality very lewd, who prostituted herself with men whom she afterwards put to death secretly, whether by open assassinations or in prison. This young lord, being very Catholic and unable to endure the rigour of the persecutions then practised, or the want of the exercise of our religion, resolved to come to France, being drawn there, as he told me himself, by an extraordinary affection he had conceived for M. de Guise, who was held, in England as well as in France, to be the support and mainstay of the Catholic party in this kingdom against the Huguenots, as indeed he was; although ambition mingled in his defence of religion.'

Angélique narrates further how this Father became Director to Mme de Guise and that whole family; and how also, at a later date, he urged Angélique's mother, whom he greatly esteemed, to take charge, after M. Arnauld's death, of Mlle de Guise. Mme Arnauld declined, having the charge of her household and being reserved, indeed, for another destiny.

The Father Archangel saw also the younger sister, Agnès, at the age of fourteen, still titular Abbess of S. Cyr, and was so struck with her intelligence, discretion, and gravity, that he predicted she would be some day one of the greatest and most saintly nuns in France. He himself 'lived to see his Order degenerate and the young Monks endure with difficulty his love of austerity and of simplicity, which was the spirit of the Fathers when he had first become acquainted with them'. He rode only upon an ass, after he could no longer go on foot; 'when travelling with Mme de Guise, he continued always his simple habits of life, eating only the simplest food.'

But this kind and venerable Father had not the force of mind and intellect that could inspire full confidence. Angélique met with the first true Director of her spirit only later, when ten years of reform already had elapsed, in the person of François de Sales. She summed up to her nephew all her previous advisers:—

'Up to him (François de Sales), I have seen all the men of devotion of that time, Father Pacific, Father Bernard, and Father Archangel, all three Capuchins; Father Binet, Jesuit; M. Duval, doctor of Sorbonne; M. l'Abbé de la Charmoye, Bernardine, &c. But I was never able to have entire confidence in any of them, finding some too subtle for

me, who loved sincerity and frankness, especially with persons of conscience. Father Binet and M. Duval were among these. The others were more open ; but they seemed to me so limited in their knowledge that I conducted myself with great circumspection and great reserve towards them, consulting them only in matters where they seemed capable of giving me good advice, some on one subject, some on another. But when God gave me the acquaintance of M. de Genève (François de Sales) in 1619, I found in him such great sincerity coupled with so much grace and understanding of my needs, that I put my heart in his hands without any reserve, finding in him alone more than I had found in all the others.' ¹

While unable in these earlier years to rest her authority upon other shoulders, she had at least, within the convent, a growing support in its exercise. Gradually within the community, so ignorant and mediocre in its first members, was formed a little nucleus of superior spirits, fine in character and capable in brain. Most notable were the Abbess' own sisters.

When Angélique returned to Port Royal after that critical illness, she brought back with her, to be educated, her little sister Marie Claire, then seven years old. This child conceived for her a passionate love, and was enticed by it, she also, into the paths of self-sacrifice.

The elder sister and young Abbess talked, in her girlish fervour, to the children in the convent, and to Marie Claire in particular, about her dream of retiring to a desert, where she would live only on roots and herbs and pray continually to God. 'As her little sister Marie Claire, who loved her passionately, made her promise to take her with her, the Mother Angélique availed herself of it to wean her from all her little daintinesses as to food, among others her dislike to *le maigre* and vegetables, telling her that if she could not eat all such things she would certainly not take her to live in a desert where one eats only roots ; and in this way she brought her to it so well that she gave her command of a self-denial perfect in this respect, in which she went even beyond the general rules.'

Marie Claire herself recounted this to the Mère Angélique de

¹ *Entretiens . . . avec M. le Maître, Mémoires pour servir . . .*, P. 300 seq.

S. Jean. She related also that when she was nine or ten years old, at the beginning of the reform, she, with her companions, observed in her sister the Abbess and in all the nuns, such zeal for mortification and penance, that even they were fired and strove to imitate them, seeking opportunities of conquering their dislikes in order to practise self-denial:—

‘Two of these children, thinking of a means in their opinion good for that, went to gather in the garden nasty herbs, and among the rest a quantity of nightshade, and, having shredded them, they drank the concoction with as much distaste as though they had been taking a medicine less dangerous, since they ran the risk of making themselves very ill. But God did not permit so evil a result of their fervour, which they desired further to accompany by an act of charity, thinking they should communicate so fine an invention to their little comrade, Sister Marie Claire, who doubtless would not have discovered it for herself, since she was by nature very dainty in her food, although for the rest as eager as the others to imitate the devoutness and penitence of the Nuns. She gave good testimony by accepting this one, when her companions proposed it to her; but it was with such violence to her feelings, and repugnance, that when the girl who looked after her chanced to come into the room while the two others had gone to prepare the drink which the poor child awaited as her torture, she found her deadly pale and trembling, so that, surprised, she thought her ill and urged her to say what it was, and at length by her entreaties made her disclose this purpose she would not at first avow. In this manner her goodwill was taken for the deed, and she received full dispensation of her promise and the others a little reprimand for their indiscreet zeal.’¹

To these convent children Angélique’s dream of desert life was stimulating, it is clear, as Robinson Crusoe.

At the age of fourteen, Marie Claire paid a home visit to Andilly, and returned for the time spoiled for convent-life and peevish at the simplicity and discipline. But Angélique won her again by an untiring patience that, making as though it observed nothing, retouched little by little the chords of union.² With girlhood the tender and impressionable nature kindled finally with the fire of self-sacrifice. Marie Claire

¹ *Relation . . . par la Mère Angélique de S. Jean*, Mémoires pour servir . . . , vol. i, p. 86.

² *Ib.*, pp. 68–9.

took the vows, and her fervour had now to be directed and held in check rather than incited.

But besides this child, too young to share yet in the charges of the convent, Angélique had the happiness of bringing to her side from the earliest days of reform, that other sister, Agnès, only two years her junior and her fellow in destiny. From her she could receive an equal support; she hoped to shift upon her in time the whole charge and dignity of Abbess. And yet again the next sister, Anne Eugénie, destined by her parents for marriage, discovered that no earthly bridegroom—no, not M. de Guise himself—could satisfy her rising thoughts,¹ and joined her sisters at Port Royal.

The narrative of the Mère Angélique passes now to these two sisters, her account of the second leading her (glad when the tale of God's Providence turns away from her own person) too far afield and to events too far out of the course for us to follow her. The admission of Anne Eugénie to Port Royal and her individual joyousness are here in place, but not yet her share in the reform of other nunneries. Nor does the history of the nun Marie des Anges, to which the narrative turns afterwards, belong rightly here.

Narrative of the Mère Angélique (continued)

'Since,' Angélique continues, 'I have spoken of the Profession of the Mère Agnès, my sister, I think I should tell how God has conducted her, since it is one of the great effects of His goodness and divine Providence for this House. At the same time that the coadjutorship of this House was obtained for me, in 1599, the Abbey of S. Cyr, which is only two leagues from Port Royal des Champs, was obtained for her, who was only five years old; and in order to preserve it for her, it was given to a Nun to keep, on the condition of restoring it into her hands so soon as she should be twenty. To this end she was brought to the Abbey with the Abbess, and received the habit at six and a half.

'She took to all the practices of Religion with so much affection, and especially to the Divine service, that at the age of nine she knew the psalms by heart, and all the chants and the ceremonies, observing them with marvellous exactitude. I was also taken to that Convent six weeks after I had received

¹ *Entretiens de la Mère Angélique avec M. le Maître, Mémoires pour servir . . .*, vol. ii, pp. 338-9.

the habit at S. Antoine des Champs, and I lived there for eight months with my sister. But, since this Abbey did not belong to the Order of the House of which I was Coadjutrix, I was taken to Maubuisson, where I was made to profess four months later ; because they would not grant me the Bulls so long as I was a Novice. For that object, they had me confirmed and changed my name from Jacqueline to that of Angélique, so as to redemand the Bulls under another name. Two years later Mme Boulehart, Abbess in this Convent, died, and I was brought here, and frequently my sister was brought to see me. In the midst of our games, when it rang for service, she left everything to attend or to repeat the office ; and, perceiving that I did not repeat it at all, she remonstrated with me. But since I answered that, when I should be older, I would go away somewhere to be a Lay Sister for penance, she was so frightened that she dared not say anything more about it.

When God touched me she was surprised ; and, although she was very glad to see me pray to God, she was scandalized at the rest, above all at the vileness of the dress, since she cared greatly for neatness. She came with me to my father's, and I brought her back, passing by S. Cyr. Shortly after, she came to see me, being quite ill ; and, as I was ever more fortified in the wish to belong to God, He gave me the desire of attracting her ; which was difficult enough, for she was attached to her Order, and also, I think, to her supposed Charge. I greatly caressed her ; and little by little the love she had always had for prayer increased, to such an extent that she would drag herself, languid as she was, to the church, where she remained for whole hours. She was torn between her love for me and her repugnance to leave her Order and her Convent. At length it occurred to me to tell my father, who came to see us and found her very languid, that she was suffering from melancholy and that she would have been happy had he thought fit for her to leave S. Cyr. I said this because of my desire to have her, and to relieve my father's conscience of this Abbey, which was a secret arrangement. My father, believing that her illness came from what I said, told her that he desired only her happiness, and that, if she wished to live with me, he was quite willing. She was taken by surprise, but nevertheless did not venture to contradict me.

After that, there came to her little by little a genuine desire to be Nun here, and a complete aversion to possessing the Abbey, even could she have had it legitimately. I left her for more than a year after her desire, without giving her our dress, in order to test her ; and she became truly a different creature in submission, humility and love of poverty.

‘While she was still a Novice, I made her, by the advice of the Capuchin, Father Archangel, who assisted us, Mistress of the other Novices. For I had nobody who had the smallest talent for that, and up to then I had been Mistress myself. She acquitted the post very well. This Father told me, when she was still only seventeen, that she would be one of the greatest Nuns in France. Our Sisters had such docility that not one of them found anything to say against it, and they all revered her. In addition, there was nothing humble in the House that she did not do, even to scouring the stoves ; so that she had her fingers all rough. Her failing was her attachment to work beyond what her strength could sustain, to fasting, and to divine service ; and when it so happened that, because of her weakness and infirmities, which were considerable, I prevented her from attending matins on some great Feast, there was no means of preventing her from weeping greatly.

‘Her example served not a little to fortify our Sisters. The two Nuns of S. Antoine who came to us at the same time, one of whom I made Infirmarian and the other Mistress of five or six Pupils, were also a great help to us. They were already old, and good women, with more intelligence and knowledge than those of our House. Thus little by little our Monastery was established in good, and we were in possession of great peace and of great poverty.

‘Before the reform, I had asked my father freely for all we needed, as he wished ; but, after I had seen that he did not approve my purpose, I would no longer ask him for anything ; and to cover our necessities I sold the silver plate I had. But that did not suffice to prevent our suffering. However, we lacked nothing essential, only our furniture, dress and accommodation were very poor ; and we were very well satisfied with it. There were only twelve cells in the dormitory of the Professed Nuns. The infirmaries were low and damp, like cellars. The Sisters we received almost all fell ill, and that did not discourage them. God sent us several, among others one who lived only ten years after her Profession (Sister Claire Martine Pinot), who was incomparable in all monastic virtues. She had been rejected by the Ursulines, because they found her not sufficiently capable. Her Confessor, who knew us, gave her to us ; and although she had small means, I esteemed myself happy to have her. We received yet another (Sister Isabelle Agnès de Châteauneuf), who had been Pupil and Postulant at the Ursulines, and whom they would not admit for a reason which I did not approve. She was a Sister all perfect, whom Our Lord had called, and who gave us from the moment of her admission examples of virtue.

I took her to Maubuisson¹ with me, to be Mistress of Novices there, where she conducted herself in such a manner that the old Nuns revered her as a saint. She died, as she had lived, in a marvellous humility and trust in God. We received also certain others who brought us little money, but this little sufficed us well enough, for all that we did for our accommodation was very poor ; so that very little sufficed us.

‘God gave me from the first a great aversion to bargain for Nuns. I well believe that there was much human pride mingled, for it seemed to me very shameful. God had given me the grace also to learn this truth from an Archbishop (M. d’Auch) who came to see us to confirm our Sisters. For there were only one or two who had been confirmed, and not a single one who knew what this Sacrament signified. And it was the first Capuchin Father who had acquainted us with the obligation of receiving it, and who had begged the said Archbishop to come and confer it on our Sisters. Now this Prelate, in speaking to me, told me that it was simony to exact money before receiving girls to be Nuns. This remained in my mind ; and although people have tried to move me from this opinion, they have never succeeded, perhaps because it favoured my tendency to pride ; for, as for the rest, I was very glad, on account of our needs, when any came to us who had means.

‘Little by little I set the House in order. My father, being pacified, obtained permission from our General to enter, in order to attend to the plants of the garden and to our buildings ; which he did with great care. He had our infirmaries raised a story. When one of my sisters (Sister Anne Eugénie de l’Incarnation) became a Nun, he built the cloister walls, which were before only of earth and so low that no ladder was needed to climb them, and besides there were frequent gaps.

‘I think that it is to the point to narrate how this Sister, of whom I have just spoken, became Nun. She was brought up, when little, at S. Cyr with the Mother Agnès. She was very devout, like her ; and, when she came with her to see me, she too was shocked to see that I did not pray to God. She had some wish to be a Nun here in her childhood, but it passed away at the age of fourteen. She returned to the world, and completely caught its spirit. She had a great affection for me, and, when everybody was opposed to me in the matter of reform, she was always on my side, and defended me as best she could, and I believe that God rewarded her for it. I had a great desire that she should be a Nun, and prayed God for it with all my heart ; but she had an extreme disinclination,

¹ V. *post*, p. 77.

being altogether vain and worldly,—not frivolous, but proud and self-satisfied in the extreme. At length God sent her a severe illness, in the course of which an event made her believe that she should die ; and at the same time she was struck with extreme terror at the thought of her sins, which set her in such distress that her malady increased still more. In this distress God gave her grace to have recourse to His mercy ; and she promised Him that if He would give her time, she would love Him with all her heart. The danger passed, and, now she was cured, she began to think more of God than she had previously.

‘ My mother, who had always feared God, took her to all good sermons, but they had not touched her in the least until then, for God had not yet prepared her heart. But now she gathered all the words with great devotion, writing out afterwards what she remembered of the sermon. Thus little by little she made progress towards her happiness. She had known the Father Eustache, Feuillant, to whom my mother had already made her general confession, a good year before. She prepared as best she could to make hers, and did it with such exactness, and was so careful to ask all the advice required to live like a Christian, that this good Father, coming to see us immediately after, told me that she would be a Nun, although she did not yet wish it ; but that she had too much light and desire to serve God to remain in the world, where she could not find what she desired ; and so it was. During a sermon, a person of quality whom she did not know perceived in a tuck of the sleeve of her dress a piece of cloth, and, drawing it out, said to her : “ Mademoiselle, look what I have found in your sleeve ; it is a sign that you will be a Nun.” This frivolous speech touched her and made her believe, as she very much wished to have the desire, that she would be a Nun. A few days after, in the Chapel of S. Merri, her parish church, God gave her so great a movement to be a Nun and so great a contempt for all the world, that this feeling remained with her until death. My father and my mother were greatly surprised, and did all they could to dissuade her ; and whatever entreaty she could make to have permission to accomplish her desire, they never would give it her until a year had passed. My father feared that it was the wretchedness in which she saw my sister Le Maître, by the ill fortune she had had, that gave her the thought of being a Nun, and this grieved him. My mother believed also that her haughty spirit could never reduce itself to obedience ; and thus they retained her, to test the firmness of her will.

‘ During this time they permitted her to do whatever she



L'ADMINISTRATION DU SAINT VIATIQUE



L'ENTERREMENT DES RELIGIEUSES DE PORT-ROYAL DES CHAMPS.

THE DEATH AND THE BURIAL OF A NUN

From engravings by Madeleine Hortemels

pleased ; so that she never stirred save with devout ladies, who escorted her to the several Convents they affected, that she might enter there rather than at Port Royal des Champs. At times she was tempted to join the Carmelites ; and I confess that I was very much afraid of it, because I believed God willed her to be with us, since that had been her first thought ; and I do not doubt but that much self-interest was mingled. My father, knowing that she had some thought of going to another Convent, told her he would never permit it ; and that since her sisters were reformed she had no excuse. She yielded without difficulty, and came to us to be Nun here, on the Eve of S. Denis.

‘It happened that the following day, as she heard Mass in the outer church, there was repeated, according to the custom of Cîteaux which we then observed, the gospel *Confiteor tibi, Pater*, which runs : “*Take my yoke upon you, &c.*” She received such great joy from this reading, which seemed addressed to her, that she could not help turning to those near her with a smile, to call their attention to it. For a few days she was a little dismayed, but incontinently her joy returned, and she appeared a different creature, not only in her internal dispositions, but even in externals. She had held herself very straight in the world ; she began without intending it to stoop her head ; and, whereas she had been very neat and particular in her clothes, she instantly left everything, wearing all day a coarse cloak that she had had made to attend matins.

‘She was put in the kitchen, and set to do all the humblest things, in which she had, she said, more joy and pleasure than she had ever had at the play or at the greatest entertainments. A Sister died ; she was delighted at her funeral, and said she found it more beautiful than that of the King Henri IV, at which she had been present.

‘The Convent was then the poorest in buildings that was to be seen, and the gardens were mere swamps ; it all seemed to her very beautiful. In brief, God gave her joy and consolation in everything, save that she was tormented with scruples which made her weep ; but her docility in believing soon restored her to peace of mind. The day after her Profession, I left to go to Maubuisson. All the Sisters were in tears ; she shed not one. She said : “*God showed me too much grace yesterday that I should weep to-day.*”

‘About the same time that my sister Anne came to dwell at Port Royal, we received the Mother Marie des Anges *Suireau*

by a special working of the Divine Providence, which I must not omit to narrate. There were at Chartres three daughters of a family fairly well-to-do, who wanted to come and be Nuns. The Mother Marie des Anges, who was then only sixteen, and who had desired from the cradle to be a Nun, did not venture to come with the others, because her father, who was of good birth, but burdened with children, had small means; and although a very skilful lawyer, he made little, being such an honest man and so nice in justice, that he found scarcely any cause where it was not necessary to employ tricks and lies to sustain it; so that he preferred to live quietly with his wife, who was also very virtuous, and with his children, rather than encumber himself with the affairs of the world, trusting for his children in the Divine Providence.

‘As these three girls of their acquaintance were about to start, some one advised him to send his daughter with them, at the risk of her returning. He did so without expectation that she could remain. But no sooner had these four girls entered the parlour than my eye fell upon her, although she walked last; and she touched me so strongly that I said on the spot to the Sister who was with me, that there would be only this little one to remain. In truth the others had as poor mien as she had good, for already devoutness, modesty, gentleness and humility were painted on her countenance, and we found her from the first day of her Novitiate such as she is now in respect of these virtues.’

Here again we must interrupt the narrative, and not to augment, but to omit. This young girl, in her after history, showed a constant spirit and a union of humility and force that sets her peer with the Mothers Angélique and Agnès. But the time for its display was later, and the sphere of her activity was mainly elsewhere.¹ We cannot in her case, any more than with the Sister Anne, follow Angélique to events far ahead, which, familiar to the nuns for whom she wrote, are as yet unknown to the present reader. Marie des Anges was chosen, years later, to be Abbess of that notorious Convent of Maubuisson where Angélique had passed her childhood, and had there full exercise for a courageous humility which, indifferent

¹ Her history is related in a separate work: *Modèle de Foi et de Patience dans toutes les Traverses de la Vie, et dans les grandes Persécutions; ou Vie de la Mère Marie des Anges (Suireau), Abbess of Maubuisson et de Port-Royal, 1754.*

to all personal slights, abated nothing of the due exercise of authority and steered a straight course through the prejudices of the nuns and the intrigues of confessors. Events have brought us, however, not to her rule at Maubuisson, but to the temporary sway there of the Mère Angélique.

Ten years had passed since the establishment of reform at Port Royal, and the good fame of the convent had spread throughout the Cistercian Order; the scandalous notoriety of that other convent of the same order, Maubuisson, had come meanwhile to its height. The Abbess, Angélique d'Estrées—our Mère Angélique's sponsor—had lost her sister Gabrielle and her royal protector Henri IV. But neither for that, nor because of advancing years, had she changed her gay mode of life. The King, so it is said, Louis XIII, declared the scandal must cease; the General of the Order was able, at any rate, to count on the support of the Crown and, after futile remonstrance, proceeded to extreme measures against the recalcitrant Abbess. She was removed forcibly and confined in the *Filles Pénitentes*, while to her former pupil and namesake was given the task of restoring monastic rule and, as she at least interpreted the commission, of instilling spiritual life in this most secular of convents. Before accompanying her there, or entering upon the piquant tale of Mme d'Estrées, let us dwell again upon Port Royal, recount the points of the reform now well established, and gather in brief some other memories of the spirit and activity of nuns and Abbess.

First, as we have seen, those crying infringements of the rule and spirit of a nunnery, private property and freedom of intercourse, were done away; community and the cloister were established.

Then, within the convent, the professed Rule of S. Benedict was restored by degrees in letter and in spirit. The dress, food, furniture, and utensils were made truly poor. The pleated gowns of the nuns were refashioned on the simplest loose model *à sac*, and, from the exigencies of the stuff, were composed in great measure of pieces and patches. As for the serge that had been so distasteful to the unregenerate mind of the child-Abbess, Angélique could scarce now find any coarse

enough to content her.¹ Yet the nuns accepted her choice—a rough homespun, ‘all hairy, yellow like wax,’ *et si grasse qu’elle en est toute gluante*—, with submission. One or two only begged some little change and adjustment, and they ‘seemed like monsters’ in the general zeal; they were allowed what they would, and, so far from discipline suffering thereby, the others regarded them with pity rather than envy.²

Talking of these things later to her nuns, the Mère Angélique went on to say with great warmth, a Sister reports:—

‘If one imagines that one can belong truly to God without embracing this genuine spirit of poverty and of mortification in all things, and without every day bearing His cross; I confess that I no longer know what the Christian life is, let alone the monastic. For, in fine, what is a Christian if not a disciple of Jesus Christ, and what can we learn of Jesus Christ except what He has shown us? As for me, I cannot understand that one should believe that the Son of God, who is supremely wise, should have chosen to be born in a stable, dirty, disused, exposed to the cold of the rudest season of the year, among the animals, in the stench and in the straw; and that, while acknowledging the obligation to follow in His footsteps, one can voluntarily preserve sundry affectations of neatness, of adjustment, and all other attempts to satisfy the senses and the mind, whatever they may be. But they are fables then, all that we are told of the life of Jesus Christ? One dare not think it, much less say it; and nevertheless our actions bear witness to nothing less.

‘I forgive frailty. I know that, even though one has in the heart love for Jesus Christ, and a genuine desire to conform one’s life to His, one yet does not fail to commit faults by surprise, and to relax on occasions this constant study to cut off from nature all the idle satisfactions that it seeks. But when it is not by surprise, but a deliberate will that one cherishes and fortifies by reasons and excuses, that may indeed have some likelihood according to the wisdom of the flesh, which is hostile to God; then it is that I can no longer conceive how such sentiments and such thoughts can be reconciled with the maxims of the Gospel and the belief in the life and in the

¹ *Relation de la Mère Angélique de S. Jean*, Mémoires pour servir . . . , vol. ii, p. 469.

² *Relation de la Sœur Marie de Ste. Euphrasie Robert*, loc. cit., vol. ii, p. 466.

words of the Son of God. What ! taught as we are, that it is not permissible to enjoy any pleasure of life, but only to take the pleasure when it is not otherwise possible to satisfy necessity, do we imagine that, knowing these things and not practising them, giving licence to our eyes and our other senses to seek proprieties, adjustments, neatnesses and other superfluous conveniences, that concern, not the needs, but the gratifications of life, do we imagine, I say, and do we hope that when we shall be at the last gasp, already dying and with scarce any feeling left, when they come to give us holy unction and repeat *Indulgeat tibi Deus quidquid peccasti per visum, per gustum, &c.*, that we shall deserve indeed to obtain the effect of these words ? Will not God rather mock us in this terrible hour, as we have mocked Him in counting on His mercy and despising His example, whose imitation alone can obtain it for us.'¹

Angélique had won her nuns by personal affection, she preached to them by example. Of the coarse and unshapely garments the Abbess was careful that the rudest should be for her. Enclosure was established beyond dispute by the notorious exclusion of her own parents, whose benefits to the convent might well have pleaded for an exception to be made in their favour. Before restoring the total abstinence from meat demanded by the Rule, she practised it herself secretly for months, concealing her daily portion of omelette under a scrap of mutton so that the Prioress should observe nothing in making her the accustomed obeisance. Finding the vegetarian diet of no ill effects, she introduced it without difficulty in the convent ; and the diet thenceforth was the simple one of eggs, occasional salads, and soup of fresh vegetables or beans, according to the season, and bread which the nuns ate dipped in their soup. The changed hour of matins, from four in the morning to two, was again in accordance with the Rule. But in another change, which the nuns had some unreadiness in accepting, the Mère Angélique seems to have been guided rather by her own predilections. She instituted among the services an hour of silent prayer,² thus marking already a tendency to inwardness characteristic of Port Royal

¹ *Ib.*, pp. 466-8.

² *Relation de la Vie de la Mère Marie Angélique Arnauld . . . par la Mère Angélique de S. Jean Arnauld*, Mémoires pour servir . . . , vol. i, p. 30.

and a point of affinity with Protestantism as also with the heresy, as yet unborn, of Quietism. The Mère Angélique had never, like her sister Agnès and the others, had a natural liking for the ceremonies and services of the Church; her occasional foretastes of devotion had tended to the silent realization of the presence of God,—as a child of seven, in the broad skies; a few years later, at her installation, in the Eucharist. Accordingly there is from the first and always, in the spirit proper to her and imprinted by her upon Port Royal, an insistence upon the spiritual content and meaning of the Church ceremonies which, while exalting them, made it possible also, when the need arose, to dispense with them. But the days of such a need were as yet far ahead for Port Royal, and undreamt of. And the Abbess, while aiming supremely at the inward and spiritual knowledge of God, gave at the same time her energies and her care to the ceremonies that should foster devotion. As in all the life of the convent, so in the services of the Church, simplicity was the rule. But whereas, in the nun's rule of life, simplicity verged towards negligence and austerity, in the service of God the care was extreme for order and even for beauty in its kind. Angélique shunned the common conventual covetousness and rivalry for rich vessels and ornaments, but was scrupulous that all sacred utensils and coverings should be select and well kept; the singing and recital was an object of special care, as well to secure clearness and beauty of tone, as to avoid needless flourish and display.

In all, however, that did not relate to the service of God, but to the daily life of the nuns, simplicity went far beyond the limits of beauty. The Mère Angélique respected cleanliness, and she would suffer no negligence or slovenliness in the nuns' discharge of their allotted tasks. Her care, however, was not to observe cleanliness, but to avoid those sins so often, she found, committed in its name,—all the delicacies of proud human nature.¹ In her dread lest, under its cover, personal niceties and daintiness should creep in, she went certainly to the other extreme. She had at one time, we learn from a nun who had herself an extraordinary passion

¹ Cf. *Relation de la Sœur Marie de S. Joseph Lorsonne, Religieuse converse*, Mémoires pour servir . . . , vol. iii, p. 29.

for mortification of the flesh, an old decayed mattress to sleep on, with a cover so dirty that it made her feel ill.¹ At least, there was no natural lack of niceness in the Mother. She loved to mortify the senses, and came to find ugliness in her surroundings more conducive to piety than beauty, finding in these things the marks of her Lord; but by nature she was fastidious, and frequently, she acknowledged, saw defects where others could only admire.²

Tales of mortification are proper to the history of a convent, and are repulsive often to the judgement as well as to the unregenerate senses of the reader. Angélique had accepted her calling in the spirit and to the letter, and, turning with all her will to lead the Christian life, she followed the paths prescribed by tradition and by her rule. The narratives which her nuns wrote of her are accordingly not free from such incidents. These are, however, neither frequent nor prominent,—occasional blots, if so we must regard them, upon the full pages of her acts of charity. For, while accepting unreservedly the monastic ideal, and allowing none of the current compromises with human nature and the world, she had a principle which was a sound check upon monastic excesses. She would have these things real and from the heart. Humility of feeling must precede and determine the acts of humility; penitence must approve itself by change of character, and acts of penance be subordinated to that end. Self-imposed penances above all were tabooed. The Mother recognized that they gave back to self-love and vanity with one hand what they took from it with the other.³ Again, penances and abstinences that injured the health were a presumption, for few are of that force to bear illness as it should be borne. The sure path of penitence lay in the humble and glad acceptance of such pains and mortifications as chance set in the way,

¹ *Relation de la Sœur Marie de Ste. Euphrasie Robert. Sur l'amour que la Mère Angélique avait pour la pauvreté*, Mémoires pour servir . . . , vol. ii, p. 463.

² *Entretiens de la Mère Angélique*, p. 125; and *Relation de la Sœur N.*, loc. cit., pp. 445-6.

³ 'Elle disait sur le sujet de ces pénitences volontaires, qu'on les faisait plutôt pour se parer que pour se débarbouiller.' *Relation de la Mère Catherine Agnès de S. Paul* Arnould, loc. cit., vol. ii, p. 455.

which, as the Mère Angélique saw it, were a penance sent straight from God. Of such things, and, above all, of such things as charity for our fellows imposes, there were none so hard but that, to her mind, a good will could make them agreeable. She herself, in those early days, endured this characteristic hardship—prescribed assuredly by no rule; she slept in a room which served as passage, day and night, to the nuns, and only her real love of mortification conquered her impatience at the needless noise of their feet, when she suffered, as she did frequently, from severe headache.¹

Paramount above all were the calls of charity and the opportunities it gave for self-sacrifice. These for the Abbess were endless, and her example preached here incessantly to the nuns. She had learned the art of bleeding, and we read of her holding the foot of a lay-sister upon whom she had operated until the sweat of fatigue ran from her brow, and with a sympathy which, the patient found, did more good even than the action.² Her presence seemed to bring healing, and when she entered the infirmary the very patients thought themselves cured, forgetting their pains in the joy of seeing her. We are fain to believe that there was much purely human, much human love and tenderness, that mingled in her ministrations with the love of God, and made them so grateful to the sufferers.

Sincerity and charity were the marks of Port Royal, imprinted from these early days. To bring life into conformity with profession, to enforce literal observance of the Rule, was the first step towards sincerity; the second step, to foster the spirit of the Rule, the love of poverty, obedience and humility, afforded the Abbess a fine experience of human nature, as she tracked the windings of self-love with an insight, at the last, worthy of her contemporary, La Rochefoucauld. In her charity, for the body and the souls of her nuns first, but ever-increasingly also beyond the convent, the warm nature of the Mère Angélique found its vent. For all its poverty, *because* of its persistent poverty, Port Royal became

¹ *Relation de la Mère Angélique de S. Jean, Mémoires pour servir . . .*, vol. ii, p. 471. Cf. *Relation de la Sœur N.*, loc. cit., vol. ii, p. 444.

² *Relation . . . par la Mère Angélique de S. Jean*, loc. cit., vol. i, p. 63.

a growing centre of beneficence. As the Mère Angélique was the heart of charity within the convent, so in her hands Port Royal became a source of kindness to the neighbourhood and to an ever-widening circle. The revenues of the Abbey were small, but the needs of the nuns were yet smaller. Their simple fare was for the most part of what grew in their garden. True, they must needs keep a guest-table, for the monks of their Order who had the right to quarter themselves on a convent when they would; but here again simplicity reigned, though of a less severe kind. The Abbess had little patience with the exigencies of the monks. One of the Sisters records the Mother's amaze when a monk asked that a specially good dinner should be provided for the 'Provincial';¹ and it is probable enough that her simple table discouraged and diminished her visitors. In any case it was supplied by carp from the ponds, beef and mutton from the farm of the Abbey. The material of clothing was the cheapest to be found; the nuns made their own dress, their shoes and almost all things required for the household or for the church—the wax candles, the tin candle-sticks. In the active practical life of the nuns, there was certainly no danger of contemplative excesses. Diligent labour went hand in hand with silence; each nun being told off to a certain 'obedience', a particular branch, namely, of work. Only the idle vanities of convent industry—fine embroidery, artificial flowers, and the like—were rigorously excluded.

Waste and superfluity banished, the Abbess could exercise that disinterestedness in the choice of new nuns which set the convent in signal contrast with the communities of the time. Many a girl for whom no other provision could be made and who had a real desire for conventual life found her home at Port Royal, and was admitted to share the simple and active régime. Through these applicants, again, many an occasion for bounty fell in the Abbess' way, and when, in later years, the convent became the object of rich benefactions, she found in such channels the means of keeping it poor, sending forth by one door whatever entered by the other. Meanwhile, from

¹ *Relation de la Sœur Marie de Ste. Euphrasie Robert, Mémoires pour servir . . .*, vol. ii, p. 465.

the very first days of reform, her charity was exercised towards the poor of that country district in good offices to the sick, with such simple skill as she possessed in surgery and medicine, accompanied by gifts of clothing also, and food in cases of extreme want. She was glad especially when she could provide work, 'seeking the good of their souls as well as of their bodies, and that in receiving alms they should not become idle.'

'M. Arnauld,' we are told, 'seconded her endeavours on this point (for he was himself very good to the poor), and had that end partly in view when he undertook to raise the walls of the cloister. A number of poor folk were employed in this work, and in addition to their day's wages received their food from the Convent. The Mother Angélique caused a quantity of soup to be made every day, and served to them in the garden, with meat, bread, and a flask of wine. She was present herself with sundry Sisters to see to the distribution. She made them sit in good order while they dined, made some little boy read aloud, from a religious book suited to their intelligence, so as to instruct them at the same time that she fed them; and she did these things with such zeal and feeling, that when once a scoffing spirit' (a *libertin*) 'uttered words of mockery upon what was read, she could not refrain from tears at the impiety.'¹

¹ *Relation . . . par la Mère Angélique de S. Jean, Mémoires pour servir . . .*, vol. i, p. 67.

CHAPTER IV

The Mère Angélique goes to Maubuisson.—Her intercourse there with S. François de Sales and Mme de Chantal.

THE ten years which had brought Angélique to mature womanhood had in nowise abated her courage. The first strong turning of her will and her emotion into the channel of her allotted calling was confirmed and deepened by daily discipline and endeavour. She lived those ten years in the cherished light of her ideal, in sustained faith in the spiritual world ; yet more, she found full exercise, in the service she had vowed, for her natural energy and strong intelligence. It is not surprising that her purpose did not slacken. The more striking witness to her rich strength of nature and to the vitality of her aim is that time, in strengthening, neither stereotyped nor hardened her. The rich fount of human feeling, of warm affectionate sympathy, was as ready for the winning of the elder nuns at Maubuisson, who had played with her in her childhood, as when she charmed the delicate or peevish humours of her young sister Marie Claire. Yet, so entirely were human affections subordinated to her fervour for the service, as she conceived it, of Christ, that, bringing with her to Maubuisson that younger sister, she could gladly face for her, and for the young nun her companion, the probability, seeing their delicate frames, of total ruin to health.¹

So, too, after those ten years of the exercise of authority, and the successful moulding of her convent to the primitive ideal, the hope was fresh as ever in her of laying down her authority and re-entering the religious life as simple nun. The on-looker may see only the advantage to her character in this charge of Abbess, with its demands on her energies, its call

¹ *Relation de la Vie . . . de la Sœur Marie de Ste. Claire Arnauld, Mémoires pour servir . . .*, vol. iii, p. 427. Cf. *post*, ch. v, p. 77-8.

upon qualities of heart and of intellect. The Mère Angélique herself in her old age admits a certain safeguard in the post. One avoids oneself, she assures a Sister troubled at authority entrusted to her, the faults one warns others of; and she found compensation for the dangers in the extreme confusion which, she said, comes on one when one has been guilty of the insolence of office (*des insolences*, it is her word),¹ But at this time she was oppressed by the dangers, for her especially, who was prompt, impatient, and by nature self-assertive and self-willed. And, beyond all and unanswerable, was that knowledge of the unlawfulness of her charge.

In the summons to take charge temporarily of Maubuisson, she saw a possible opportunity for accomplishing her design. The task of reforming that convent would, she anticipated, and soon found to be the case, be one requiring much time, and her long absence from Port Royal might serve, she hoped, as an excuse for substituting there another Abbess. That hope was not realized; but the episode of Maubuisson not merely afforded her wider, and indeed dramatic, experiences but lifted her also from out the pitiful control of jealous and self-indulgent monks, and of directors who, whatever their piety, were intellectually either narrow or oblique, into the hands of a man of real force and excellence of mind as of character. At Maubuisson, the Mère Angélique came in contact with S. François de Sales, and found in him a guide who could sustain without cramping, and to whom she could make freely the vow of obedience that eased her somewhat of the burden of authority. Again, forced hitherto to take the lead among the sister-spirits she had gathered,—the eldest in years as the first in authority,—she now for the first time tasted the happiness of unreserved confidence in an older woman, of like aims but wider experience. Through François de Sales she came into communion with his friend and fellow-worker, Mme de Chantal, head of his newly-instituted Order of the Visitation, and her letters to her show the expansive and joyous freedom of a child.

¹ *Relation de la Mère Marie de l'Incarnation Le Conte, Prieure de Port-Royal, Mémoires pour servir . . .*, vol. iii, pp. 11-12. Cf. *Lettres de la Mère Angélique*, vol. i, pp. 594-5.

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She records in her narrative the events of her five years' absence from Port Royal with all brevity :—

Narrative of the Mère Angélique (continued)

'As our House began to be settled, in 1618, the General of the Order, M. Boucherat, directed me to go to Maubuisson in order to govern and reform the House, during the trial of the Abbess, whom they had imprisoned in the *Filles Pénitentes*. I left the Prioress in charge, and made the Mother Agnès Subprioress, before quitting Port Royal. I went with joy to Maubuisson, because it was always my intention to give up the Abbey, and I thought that my being elsewhere might well afford me the means of accomplishing my purpose.

'I left Port Royal on February the 19th ; and as I passed through Paris, our General made me stay at my father's up to the day of S. Matthew, in order to prepare the Nuns of Maubuisson to receive me. They had fallen into a great panic on learning that I was to be established as their Superior, during the trial of their Abbess. The General escorted me there himself, and two days after these Sisters became reconciled.

'I took with me four Nuns, one of whom, who was an admirable Nun, I made Mistress of Novices. There were only sixteen professed Nuns in this House, and I was directed to receive a number sufficient for such a Monastery, which was founded for a hundred. As soon as it was known that this House was being reformed, and that girls were received for nothing, a great number offered themselves, but, out of perhaps some sixty or eighty, we admitted only thirty, because the majority were brought by the covetousness of their parents, or by their own, hoping to find a good and honourable position in a fine and well-endowed Monastery.

'At first I believed I should be there only two or three years, but, seeing that it promised to be for longer, it occurred to me, in order to promote my design of giving up the Abbey, to write to my father that I saw clearly the affairs of this House would last a long time ; that I feared so long an absence might bring some deterioration to our House under a lesser authority ; that I implored him to think well to permit me to resign the Abbey to my sister, the Mother Agnès ; that we were in so complete a union that he might be assured I should live as happily under her control when I returned, as she had done under mine.

'My father caught me very cleverly, for, receiving my proposal with joy but not as I had intended it, he wrote to me that I had very good grounds for wishing to give my

sister authority, but that it must be by making her Coadjutrix, and not by resigning in her favour ; and he sent me this reply through an Apostolic Notary. I was very much taken by surprise ; but nevertheless I did not venture not to sign the Procuration he sent me, consoling myself with the hope that my sister being Coadjutrix would give me always greater facility to retire. My father was enchanted to take the occasion of my employment at Maubuisson to obtain this Coadjutorship, which would otherwise have been difficult, since I was only twenty-eight years old.

‘At that time the Blessed Bishop of Geneva, François de Sales, came to Paris. I had no sooner heard it than I had an extreme desire to see him, for the esteem in which I held his godliness ; and God provided me the means through a man of position, (M. de Bouviers), who had sent us his daughter, who was not yet confirmed. I begged him to bring him in order to confer on her this Sacrament, which was easy for him, since he was the Presenter of the Ambassadors. He brought him accordingly on April the 5th, 1619. He (François de Sales) preached to us, gave the confirmation, and left us the same day. If my desire to see him had been great, the sight of him gave me a much greater desire to impart to him my conscience. For God was truly and evidently in this holy Bishop, and I had not yet found in anybody that which I found in him, although I had seen those who had the greatest reputation among devout persons. I wrote to him, to beg him very humbly to return. He promised it me. But in the meanwhile I opened my heart to him by letters, in regard to a very great trouble which I had, namely, that I had never found any one in whom I could place an entire confidence and afterwards a true submission, and that I made use, in taking advice and direction, of those who assisted us, according as I recognized that they were disposed to what I desired and believed good and useful for the welfare of our Sisters, thus taking a partial direction of those whom I believed to favour my thoughts and my desires ; which gave me much inquietude, because as a fact it was directing myself. He replied to me that there was no harm in searching from several flowers the honey one could not find upon one alone, and judges favourable to our inclinations, if only these, after being examined, were found good.

‘I admired this answer, although I found it dangerous so to act. But in truth I had been obliged ; and, if I had done otherwise with the persons who had hitherto assisted us, we should have done nothing at all. He came to see us immediately after. I spoke to him of the Coadjutorship, imploring

him to be good enough to take the trouble of going to console the Mother Agnès, who had been so distressed that when they came to make her take the oaths she had fallen ill. At first he said to me: "What, my daughter, are you one of those who desire to perpetuate Benefices in their families?" I told him, no, and that I had chosen my sister, believing in all conscience that she was the most capable of the House, which satisfied him. He had the goodness to come and see her, and wrote to me that he had found her entirely to his mind, and all the House, which was truly the Port Royal, that he loved and would love always. He returned afterwards to Maubuisson and remained there nine days.

'I made him my general Confession, with a great satisfaction and desire to belong more to God. I communicated to him my desire to leave my charge in order to turn simple Nun, and begged him to receive me into his Congregation of the Visitation. He spoke to me of it with great humility, saying it was scarcely a Religious Order. Nevertheless, on being very much pressed, he consented to my writing to Rome, since I required dispensation, our Order being more austere. If this holy man had remained in France, I believe I should have derived great benefit from his holy direction, which was in nowise soft and mild, as most of the world have imagined; for he did not disclose himself save to souls that had a true confidence in him, and that he saw disposed to believe him; and of all those I had seen before him, I found none so firm as he.

'When first I had the blessing of seeing him, and he inquired into our manner of living, he thought it austere and said to me: "My Daughter, were it not better to take fish less large, and to take more?" I replied that if I had had to make a Rule, I thought I should have made it milder; but that, finding myself in an austere one, I conceived I ought to have it kept so far as I possibly could, which he approved. On reforming in his Diocese certain Nuns of our Order who were in great irregularity of life, he had contented himself with re-establishing what was essential in the Rule, to rectify morals; and for the rest, he had left them in the mildness of the rules of the Visitation; but, after he returned, he set them again so far as he could in the practices of the Order, and, among other things, he deprived them of the use of linen, and made them adopt chemises of serge, of which they complained to him some time after, saying it gave them vermin; to which he replied that it was no marvel that vermin should eat vermin. It was the good Mother de Chantal who told me that, and I have thought it right to record it here, in order

to show that this holy man had no sweetish devotion, as has been asserted. He excused nothing in souls that wished to be directed in the truth, and any one who considers well the rules he gave to his Nuns will see that he desires them as dead to themselves and crucified with Jesus Christ as any an one. When I went into their Houses in Paris, at the time that their good Mother the Foundress established them, I was enchanted at the devotion, the silence and the mortification that I saw ; and in fact they were more austere than is supposed.

'M. de Genève returned to his Diocese, and I remained still more than three years at Maubuisson with great hindrances and difficulties. I continued, so long as he lived, to communicate to him my state of mind, and he took the trouble to reply to me with great care and extreme goodness. After his death I continued in this same Monastery without Direction, all those I had seen before being no longer there, authority having removed them. I received there thirty-two girls, out of whom we made ten Professed Nuns.'

This intercourse with François de Sales and with Mme de Chantal gave a definite colour to Angélique's hopes of retirement. The Order of the Visitation which they were founding approved itself at once to her sober judgement and to her fervent devotion, and she longed for admittance there as simple nun. It seemed to her that with the Bishop's aid she might now accomplish her design.

She had come in contact already with the more notorious Order of the Carmelites, introduced somewhat earlier with great éclat into France, under the patronage more especially of the Cardinal de Bérulle and Mme Acarie, and now in full fervid growth. She stayed at their convent at Pontoise on her way from Port Royal to Maubuisson, and verified with her own senses the reputed sweet odour that rose from Mme Acarie's tomb. It was perceptible, she tells her nephew, not only to herself, but also to her sister, the Mère Agnès, *who had lost the sense of smell*. And she testifies to the excellence of that sainted foundress. The Order, however, did not attract her. When the nuns urged her to join them, she put them off with the reminder that their Constitutions forbade them to receive nuns from other Orders.¹

¹ *Entretiens de la Mère Angélique avec M. le Maître, Mémoires pour servir . . .*, pp. 311-12, 315.

The fashionable success, as also the visionary tendencies of this Order, as she knew it in France, repelled her. She found too little simplicity in the nuns, 'women of the Court of France,' as she describes them, whom the reputation of the House induced to enter there from its first establishment :—

'For,' she observes to her nephew, 'as M. de Bérulle was in great favour with the Queen-mother Marie de Médicis and with the Court, and as MM. de Marillac and Duval (patrons of the Carmelites) were also in favour, all the women of the Court retired there, and it had perhaps been desirable that so many had not gone. For, short of God's working extraordinary miracles upon such persons, they serve often to relax the spirit and rigour of discipline, and draw Houses away from monastic simplicity and poverty. Thank God,' she adds in retrospect, 'we have none at Port Royal, and we are well without.'

'I do not know how it was,' she tells her nephew again, 'that with the report of this new establishment of the Carmelites, I did not feel strongly disposed to go there. I had thought of the Feuillantines, who were good, austere, hidden, remote from the favour of the Court and the esteem of the world, by which the Carmelites were besieged. I did not like this renown, I wished only to be hidden, and I believed myself more so even at Port Royal des Champs than among the Carmelites. Thus I sought for a hidden Convent, beloved by God and unknown to men.'

'It is true that the acquaintance I then made with the spirit and the holiness of M. de Genève, and that which he procured me with Mme de Chantal, made me think of the Order of S. Mary (the Visitation). It pleased me very much that this Prelate thought less of visions and revelations than did M. de Bérulle and the Carmelite Mothers. Not that I did not honour those of S. Theresa, but as things extraordinary and miraculous, and without believing that we should make a precedent of them for other women, whom God does not destine, like her, to found new Orders or to reform the ancient. When I heard these good Mothers say that M. de Marillac, who had rendered them great service and who was afterwards Keeper of the Seals, had had from the age of fourteen the humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ always present at his side without ever leaving him, I found it hard not to be amazed at the trifling of the human mind, and I desired to avoid these exalted and sublime paths, fearing error and illusion.'¹

¹ *Ib.*, p. 316 seq. The Mère Angélique found more favour in the

The Order to which her desires turned, that of *Sainte Marie de la Visitation*, was directed in the less sublime, but securer, paths of practical benevolence and work. Sick-nursing was the special duty of the nuns, and the Rule was made intentionally light that there might be no needless waste of force, and that the community might embrace also women of delicate frame. This mildness gave rise to ill-natured backbiting. Certain persons who went to Maubuisson, Angélique mentions in her letters to the Mère de Chantal, 'speak of this Institution with singular contempt, thinking one goes to you only to be in comfort.'¹ These persons, moreover, were monks and ecclesiastics. They told her she would lose the reputation she had—'a reputation so vain and so unjustly acquired!'—if she joined the Order. The criticisms irritated her until she had herself finally resolved to join it, when they became a welcome aid to humility. She contented herself then with answering gently that the Rule, after all, was that of the greatest Order of the Church (S. Augustine's); and the Constitutions were made by a great and holy Bishop, and could not but be good. 'Then,' she tells the Mère de Chantal, 'I listen to them with humility. But to some one who said that each Nun was asked every morning what she would like for dinner, I said very roughly that it was very far from the truth.'

The Mère Angélique's desire to join this Order was strong and constant. She tested it to herself, to see if it was her affection for S. François and Madame de Chantal that swayed her. In the letter above quoted she writes:—

'My very dear Mother, the Superior of the Feuillantines writes to me and professes to desire greatly that we should be great friends; it is my brother' (M. d'Andilly) 'who is the cause of it. I honour very highly this Mother, believing her a good servant of God; but her letters are such a burden to me that nothing is more so; and I do not know what to say to her, for my heart will not open in that direction. What should one do? I implore you, my dear Mother, to tell me.

eyes of the Carmelites than they in hers. On a later occasion when she visited them, they compared her to S. Theresa, 'saying that she resembled her entirely, not only in spirit but in face, and that the Saint had sundry warts in the same places that she had.' *Ib.*, p. 318.

¹ *Lettres de la Mère Angélique*, vol. i, pp. 12-13.

I send you her letter and what I reply. If you approve of it, will you please give it to M. Manceau, who is coming to see you this week, and he will take it? You see, my dear Mother, my brother is passionately attached to this good woman, and he wants her to love me and me her, and I think he would be very pleased that I should go with her, but God does not call me at all.

‘I must tell you, my very dear Mother, that I have thought deeply over it, and also over the *Visitation*. I reckon that at the very worst I should never see you there, nor yet Monseigneur, that you would both die long before me, and that our dear Mistress, whom I love very much, would die also. I picture to myself that our Sister called Petit in the world, whom I dislike very much, will be my Superior, and that is not capable of putting me out of conceit, because that would not prevent me from keeping the Rule, and the Constitutions.’¹

She had written previously that she thought, if what she wished did not come to pass, it was impossible but she should die of it, so little could she reconcile herself to living in her post:—

‘Although I repeat often enough, I desire it if God desire, it is not with my heart, and I say it rather from fear that if aught else is perceived, it will be said to be a temptation, which I cannot at all believe. It seems to me that even if Monseigneur the Bishop of Geneva were to say it, I should not believe it; although I would not execute my design without him, even if I could, for I would rather die than disobey him. But, nevertheless, I shall not ever be able, it seems to me, to pluck out this desire from my heart.’²

The expression of her desire recurs again and again as, Abbess of Port Royal and temporary Abbess of Maubuisson though she be, she lays her heart with a childlike simplicity in the hands of this Mother. ‘For the love of God,’ she writes, ‘my dear Mother, love me always, and make me, by your prayers and your maternal care, to be all His. For I am your true child, who places herself all, all, all entirely in your hands.’ She confesses to her her faults and confides the difficulties of her post. A week she had thought to have free for a retreat must be devoted to going through the accounts

¹ *Lettres de la Mère Angélique*, vol. i, pp. 12-13.

Ib., p. 3.

with the Commissioners of the Order, a thing more disagreeable to her than anything; 'and besides, what risks of sin in so much discourse, and of murmuring, perhaps, with these persons!' Failing the retreat, she makes a self-examination in the manner taught by Philothea (in the *Devout Life* of S. François), and finds sundry sins of impatience and inattention, of lack of charity, even of hypocrisy, to confess. She owns first that her acquiescence in the divine will, as regards her purpose of leaving, is not, it seems to her, genuine, 'there remaining always a certain self-seeking (*propriété*)' which she never gets rid of, and which occasions her extreme pain and even illness when she meets with contradiction. But besides this, she is often irritable with her nuns, and wears a vexed air (*Je fais souvent une mine bien chagrine*). She has two or three times been a hypocrite and refused, under pretext of abstinence, things to eat which she really disliked, 'and had it been something I liked I should have taken it.'

'I talk,' she continues her confession, 'nearly all meal time, and very often about news and follies; and I reprove the Reader, either with mockery or with impatience. I do not speak at all to my Sisters, finding no time, because I waste it. Once I left my prayers half said, from carelessness and lack of devotion, and once from the latter cause I neglected to attend service.'

'The great circumstance in all my faults is that, as a rule, while committing them, I see in fact the evil I do, and what I ought to do for my right guidance; and, however much I attempt to resist the light, I cannot expel it. That happens especially when my faults are against charity, and yet I cannot conquer my ill humour. I run on always, and with zeal, because it seems to me my impetuosity in this does not displease you. In brief, my very dear Mother, I am all imperfection, and my trouble is that I do not see any means, where I am, of correcting myself, for all is an occasion of offending. I do not say that to importune you, my dear Mother; it escaped me,—forgive me for it.'¹

We assume for the reader what Angélique assumed for the Mère de Chantal, that these details do not displease, and propose to continue this letter almost in full. To her nuns,

¹ *Lettres de la Mère Angélique*, vol. i, p. 1 seq.

the Mère Angélique's native impetuosity appeared as it broke out in quick acts of charity, in untiring zeal for their bodies and souls, sometimes also in acts of mortification and penance. In this correspondence we see her with her own eyes, well aware how that impetuosity of the natural woman betrayed her, under trying circumstances, into irritation and anger.

Her chief provocations arose, not from the nuns, but from the monks, from those of the Order who had prescriptive right to govern the convent and who were opposed, more or less openly, to the Abbess and to reform, and even from visiting monks of other Orders whom she found incompatible in humour :—

‘There is here at our gate,’ she writes, ‘a Superior from the Capuchins, who is very clever and an honest man, but of a humour I cannot tell how. He wants me to caress him, to tell him my affairs and show him great confidence ; and I, I cannot ; which so puts him out that he complains largely of it, as though I treated him with insupportable contempt, a thing I am outwardly very far from. But in truth inwardly I find it hard enough to respect idle humours and to believe that souls who feed upon these trivialities (*ces niaiseries*), can have a great spirit of devotion, as they say of this one. For the rest he preaches very well, and our good Dames like hearing him, though without fruit.’ (These Dames, *nos anciennes Dames*, were the original nuns to whom the Mère Angélique was to bring reform.)

‘My dear Mother, I have always regard for the world. I am entangled in a troublesome affair, and I have any number of enemies. A man like that is quite enough to discredit me with his Order ; for they back one another up in these idle seekings for honour. Now, as to confiding in him, it is impossible to me, nor assuredly ought I to do so ; but I deceive him at this very time while I wish to cure him of his insane passion for trifling. I waste a great deal of time in it, and that with dissipation of mind ; for I treat him to idle discourses, and that, too, with equivocation and similar trickery, in order to get rid of him.

‘I am obliged to behave thus with almost all the Monks. Their conversation is a thousand times more dangerous to me than that of secular persons ; because to the latter, when I collect myself a little, I say good things ; but with these others it would be playing the conceited and the preacher ; and when I listen to them they talk nothing but triviality,

and if I do not answer with the same they say I snub them (*que je fais la froide*), that they no longer know me, that now I esteem nobody but bishops, &c. I am paying interest now for the time past, when I entertained all the world. Thus I have made a thousand acquaintance whom I cannot shake off. The other day I gave some of these persons to understand that I despised others whom I knew they did not esteem, and that in flattery.

‘If God does not aid me, as I trust of His goodness through your means, my very dear Mother, no, I shall not be able to bear up in these entanglements and in a thousand other difficulties as to the temporal affairs here, which are in extreme confusion and bring disorder and extreme inconvenience to my poor Sisters, and no means of regulating them. God will bring round Monseigneur’ (to consent to her retirement); ‘I believe it because you tell me, and he will take pity upon me.’

Not the monks alone fell short, in their intercourse, of the Mère Angélique’s standard. She was scarcely better edified by the occasional visits of M. de Belley (Pierre Camus), friend of François de Sales, but friend who had all the defects of the saintly bishop’s qualities, who carried flowery eloquence into the regions of bad taste, and changed affability into adulation and flattery.¹ The letters of S. François himself were so appreciative that her modesty forbade her later, after his death, to yield up more than a very few to be published; but the real earnestness of the man, under all his urbanity, made his praise an incentive, and not a hindrance, to moral endeavour, while we have her own unimpeachable evidence that he was nowise weak or indulgent at bottom. The praises of M. de Belley, on the contrary, she found to be downright injurious :—

‘The good M. de Belley,’ her letter goes on, ‘who had written to me, has arrived. I like him because he is good; but he yet further disturbs my mind with his very idle and extravagant praise. For my wicked mind takes pleasure in it, and I find it hard to tear up his letters, which are such fine panegyrics. I cannot refrain from answering and holding intercourse with him, and yet I have almost a scruple in doing it, conceiving that it is not so much the respect I have for his merit as the esteem which I know he has for me, that

¹ Cf., *vs* M. de Belley, Sainte-Beuve, *Port-Royal*, vol. i, p. 241 seq.

pleases me. I do not know if I ought to beg him to come or no. His sermons greatly affect our old Nuns (*nos Anciennes*); as for me they gratify the vanity of my spirit more than they touch my will.' She adds in reference to her elder sister, Mme le Maître, 'I fear lest she should commit herself to M. de Belley. I should not like that, for see, my dear Mother, it seems to me that these admirers of persons do not make them make great progress. The fashion is nowadays to be satisfied with little; and it seems to me that great harm is done in this way to many souls.'

'I am very glad you have a House; but that means that you will very soon depart to it. Oh well! may the holy will of God be done, without reserve in all. I implore you to pray to God for me, my dear Mother, and that I may always be your child. . . . My dear Mother, even while writing to you, I have just been angry and have spoken with contempt of something, and I have said a thing to make them do what I wish.'

During the same month she writes again, again lamenting the conflicts and disputes she cannot avoid, and the 'indiscretion and arrogance' with which she holds her own.¹

She confesses sundry other offences, in particular a movement of jealousy toward the beloved Mother herself. For one of her Maubuisson nuns, of unsatisfactory conduct, had apparently been visiting the Mère de Chantal, and spoke of her on her return as though she had greatly loved her and been very happy with her. 'I was so vexed,' confesses Angélique, 'I believe through pride, conceiving that she despised me, that I said to her, "*that is because it is something new.*" See, my dear Mother, the force of my pride, that makes me thus traitor to my heart.'

Again: 'I have spoken three times of State affairs and repeated an opinion to some one's disadvantage. I have shown a letter I had written, from vanity, because I thought it well done. . . . I think that I do not weary you by recounting these little details, that at least, in the one way I can, I may be your little Novice.'

Mme de Chantal was moved by the tale of the younger Abbess' failings and difficulties, to think that she had truly need of 'the support of obedience', and, not without, as she

¹ *Lettres de la Mère Angélique*, vol. i, p. 8 seq.

acknowledges, a side-glance at the advantages that their own Order might derive from so true and candid a member, she writes to that end to S. François de Sales, forwarding to him also Angélique's letters.'¹

The Bishop had already dismissed the matter from his mind, thinking the difficulties insuperable and, with the larger masculine view of the situation, dwelling rather upon the advantages for the Church of a capable Abbess than upon Angélique's private needs. 'I saw well,' he writes to a third person, 'that this demand was uncommon, but I saw also an uncommon heart. I saw well the inclination of that heart to command, but I saw that it was in order to conquer that inclination that she desired to bind herself to obedience. I saw well that it was a woman, but I saw that she had been more than woman in commanding and governing, and that she might well be the same in obeying well.'²

He concludes, now that the question is urged upon him again, that it should be referred to the Pope and his decision accepted as final. The one vital point, that the authority was ill-gotten, does not seem to have caught his mind. It remained present always with Angélique and although for the moment the matter went no further, and although she was led presently to renounce the thought of quitting her Order, she did not rest until she had succeeded in laying down her position as Abbess, to resume it again, after an interval, only when lawfully re-elected by the nuns.

In his capacity as Angélique's spiritual guide, S. François displays throughout masculine common sense. He attaches small importance to the outbreaks of her native vivacity; so that they were not voluntary or deliberate and that, perceiving these movements of impatience, she strove always to moderate them, he did not distress himself.³ It takes, he reminds her, even years to break in a young horse⁴ :—

¹ *Œuvres de S. F. de Sales*, ed. 1836, vol. iii, p. 377. (Letter from Mme de Chantal, Nov. 11, 1621.)

² *Ib.*, p. 378. (Letter to the Père Étienne Binet, Jesuit, Nov. 11, 1621.)

³ *Ib.*, p. 310 (Letter of Feb. 4, 1620).

⁴ *Ib.*, p. 322 (Letter of Sept. 12, 1619).

‘Tame little by little the vivacity of your spirit to patience, gentleness, and affability amidst the trifling and childishness, and the feminine imperfections of Sisters who are delicate for themselves and given to pester the ears of the Mothers.’¹

‘I could have wished,’ he owns once, ‘that you had not rallied and mocked those persons, but that with modest simplicity you had edified them by the compassion they deserve.’

He sees that, despite the invariable purpose in her heart of living wholly to God, her great natural activity breaks out in a thousand sallies (*vous fait sentir une grande vicissitude de saillies*); he sees again her ‘entanglement in thoughts of vanity’, the ‘fertility joined to the subtlety’ of her mind lending itself to these suggestions; but, he asks, what need this trouble her? She should brush aside with a prayer these idle thoughts, as Abraham brushed aside the birds from the sacrifice; and, for her impetuosity, practise a little speaking very gently (*tout bellement*), walking gently, and doing whatever she does softly and gently.² In his eyes, she is as the palm-tree that comes but slowly to perfection, but is of so much greater worth than the swift-blossoming cherry.³ ‘God,’ he tells her,—in the light of after-events his words seemed to her to have been definitely prophetic—, ‘has cast His eyes upon you to make use of you for matters of consequence, and to bring you to an excellent way of life.’⁴

The special note struck by S. François in these letters is that of joyousness and even a certain gaiety in the service of the Cross:—

‘To abase and humble oneself is to walk with the spouse crucified; to despise oneself unto the death of all our passions, and I say unto the death of the Cross. But, my very dear daughter, note that I rejoin that this abasement, this humility, this contempt of oneself should be practised gently, peaceably, with constancy, and not only graciously, but cheerfully and joyously.’⁵

¹ *Œuvres*, ed. 1836, vol. iii, p. 320. (Letter before Sept. 12, 1619.)

² *Ib.*, p. 340. (Letter of Feb. 4, 1620.)

³ *Ib.*, p. 329. (Letter of Dec. 16, 1619.)

⁴ Cf. *Entretiens . . . avec M. le Maître*, *Mémoires pour servir . . .*, vol. ii, p. 304.

⁵ *Œuvres*, ed. 1836, vol. iii, p. 310. (Letter of June 25, 1619.)

This holy cheerfulness (*allégresse*) and joy is indeed to be 'serious and grave', 'and when I say grave, I do not mean sad or affected, or sombre, or disdainful, or haughty, but I mean holy and charitable. . . .' 'Do not,' he begs her, 'lay upon yourself too many watchings and austerities, and believe me, my very dear daughter, for I know well what I am saying.' And again: 'to eat little, work much, having great mental worry, and to refuse sleep to the body, is to seek to draw much service from a horse that is worn out, and without refreshing it.' 'But go to the port royal of the religious life by the royal road of the delectation of God and of one's neighbour, of humility and of genial courtesy.'¹

Humility and geniality are virtues that run, in his advice, always in couple.

The note found ready response in Port Royal, the convent which, rather than Maubuisson, was to reap the permanent benefit of his influence on the Mère Angélique. The highly-strung and romantic Sœur Anne Eugénie, who scarce refrained from dancing for joyousness in her convent cell, the gentle and equable Agnès with her turn for a somewhat mystic devotion, the tender Marie Claire—these sisters were all fertile soil for the seed of cheerfulness. In the sterner character of Angélique herself, an almost playful gaiety flashes through from time to time in her sayings to her nuns; but the finer blossom is the magnanimity, a certain high-minded generosity of temper, that distinguishes her. Both her creed and her personal observation taught her the vanity and weakness of human nature; the knowledge went hand in hand with charity and raised her soon far above petty irritation or resentment. It gave humility, since she too was human; it did not discourage, for, as nature was impotent, so, her creed taught her, grace was almighty. The creed of Port Royal—theologians may dispute whether or no it is the true Christian doctrine—projected all good, and all power of good, beyond human nature into God, and leant with full confidence on that extraneous aid, discouragement showing therefore as infidelity, doubt of the power of God's grace. 'No true courage without humility, no true humility without courage,' was the

¹ *Œuvres*, ed. 1836, vol. iii, p. 320. (Letter of Sept. 12, 1619.)

Mère Angélique's watchword when persecution broke over Port Royal, and that union is already here in the letters of S. François de Sales :—

‘Animate constantly your courage with humility; that is to say, your poverty and the desire to be humble, animate them with confidence in God, so that your courage may be humble, and your humility courageous.’¹

¹ *Œuvres*, 1836, vol. iii, p. 320. (Letter of Sept. 12, 1619.)

CHAPTER V

Reform at Maubuisson.—Events as narrated by the Mère Angélique de S. Jean.

THE great fruit for the Mère Angélique of her sojourn at Maubuisson was the acquaintance with François de Sales and Mme de Chantal. As regards reform, though she had her external triumph, it was as she measured it, as she conceived that God measured it, a practical failure. Neither she now, nor the young Abbess whom she sent there on a later occasion, was able to make the rich and monk-beridden convent anything approaching to a second Port Royal. Little more than respectability seems ever to have been attained ; the insuperable difficulty was always the obstruction offered by the Cistercian monks, who resented any other influence than their own, whether of Abbess or of outside directors, over the nuns, and who saw whatever might derogate from the wealth and power of the convent as robbery of their Order. Even without their secret machinations it was no light task to arouse spiritual fervour in that small body of so-called nuns, who, having entered a convent against their will, had grown old in the endeavour to mitigate their lot by all the diversions and worldly indulgences within reach. Angélique had been among them as a child, and in accepting the commission knew some at least of the difficulties she was about to encounter. To that dead weight of supineness among the main body of nuns, kept free, however, by the watchfulness of the Prioress, from gross corruption of morals, there was intrigue to be looked for on the part of the deposed Abbess, who was not without partisans among nuns and monks. Angélique had need of the courage and ardour with which she set forth to the undertaking, of which her own account is so meagre.

The idea of leaving Port Royal for Maubuisson had come to her a year or so earlier, while Mme d'Estrées still ruled,

and was suggested, humorously enough, by that Abbess's own professed purpose of reform. For the General of the Order had already resolved that the scandal of Maubuisson should be put down, though he had not as yet any thought of deposing the Abbess. She was, however, deprived of her second benefice, the Abbey of Bertaucourt ; and certain monks were sent to Maubuisson to warn her that order must be established in that convent, and that the General was about presently to visit it. These monks met with outrageous treatment, imprisonment, starvation, and what not, at her hands, so confident was she that relatives at Court would protect her, and so reliant on the convent's long immunity from interference. Not for twenty-five years had it been inspected.

Nevertheless, after this high-handed proceeding, some alarm seized her, and she thought it best to pretend a purpose of reform. Chancing, on one of her journeys, to pass by Port Royal, she called upon Angélique, and discoursed to her in that tone, giving her to understand that she sought help in the matter.

'The Mère Angélique, wishing to believe that she spoke sincerely, . . . replied to Mme d'Estrées that, if she thought her capable of rendering her any service in so good a purpose, she offered with all her heart to go and be her Prioress, to aid her in it, and that perhaps the ladies (*les Dames*), who had known her when she was little, would have more inclination for her than for another. But Mme de Maubuisson, who in truth thought of nothing less, and exercised this dissimulation only to throw dust in men's eyes by this hope of reform that she seemed to desire to bring about herself, spoke no more of the matter after this reply of the Mother, and thought still less of it, continuing in the same disorders'.¹

The General's next move was to send a monk as Commissioner to hold an inquest on the convent and the Abbess' conduct. He met with even worse treatment than his predecessors, daily stripes being added to imprisonment on bread and water, 'so that he might have died had not he found means to escape by a window.'

¹ *Relation . . . de la Vie de la Mère Marie-Angélique Arnauld . . . par la Mère Angélique de S. Jean Arnauld, Mémoires pour servir . . .*, vol. i., p. 112 seq.

The Abbess had at length gone too far. She had counted also too securely on the support of her relatives. They themselves had cause of complaint, because of the way in which she had married her young sister, whilst novice in the convent, to one of her friends, the Comte de Sanzé, without part or consent of the other relatives; and, now that complaint was brought against her in Paris, her cousin, the Cardinal de Lourdes, and her brother, the Maréchal d'Estrées, lent a hand to the General. M. de Cîteaux accordingly paid his visit of inspection, and, as the Abbess still refused resolutely to receive it, or to appear at his summons, things came to the crisis of her forcible removal. The provost with his archers surrounded the convent, forced the doors which the nuns would not open, and having at length caught the Abbess, who had fled and hidden almost naked—the guards' matutinal visit surprised her in bed—they carried her off, bed and all, a young nun accompanying her 'for propriety', to the *Filles Pénitentes*.¹

M. de Cîteaux then offered the nuns their choice of three Abbesses, of whom Mme de Port Royal was one, and as they, half inclining to the latter for memory of her childhood among them, but repelled again by the rumour of her great Reform, sought to escape the dreaded unknown and begged that a professed nun of their own House might be appointed, he cheated them by acceding to their request with secret resolution that the nun in question should be Mme de Port Royal, who had indeed, though the nuns did not think of it, made her Profession as an infant at Maubuisson. The nuns, when they learnt the appointment, awaited her coming in great alarm.

For her part, she set forth in all gladness, not only from the hope she mentions, of finding in this commission an excuse for quitting her charge, but also with a crusader's zeal for the task entrusted to her. While the community at Maubuisson awaited her coming in dread, the nuns of Port Royal were full of sorrow at her departure. All were in tears, save only the Sister Anne Eugénie, still under the dominion of the joyousness her vows had given her, and disposed, while the others were nearly expiring with sorrow, to dance with

¹ Ib., pp. 113-19.

rapture and joy. The devout Agnès, on the other hand, found consolation for the loss of her sister and spiritual Mother only by flinging herself at the foot of the Cross, repeating *Ecce nos reliquimus omnia*, with the feeling that now indeed she had no more to lose.¹

The emotion may appear excessive over what was after all a mere temporary separation. In later years Port Royal learned fortitude and self-control, by severe discipline and separations far otherwise grievous. But the community, still young and wholly moulded and inspired by the Abbess about to quit them, must have felt now bereft of their source of life, and Agnès at least knew that, if her sister had her will, the loss would be no mere temporary one. She did not yet know that the burden might be laid upon herself.

Angélique chose three nuns to accompany her: the Mère de la Croix, one of the senior and original nuns whom she had 'reformed', and who had been with her to Maubuisson when, as child-abbess, she had returned there to bid final farewell; and the two young nuns, her own sister Marie Claire, aged now eighteen, and the Sister Isabelle Agnès *de Châteauneuf*, one year older, whom she had received and trained. To these two she said—we have it from Marie Claire, recorded by the niece Angélique de S. Jean:—

'That in giving themselves to God, they had offered their lives to Him, and that up to now He had given no visible sign that He would accept their offering, but that the occasion which now offered was such an one, and that they must embrace it with an entire resolution to make to God not only a sacrifice of their powers and their health, but even of their actual life, which they must resolve to risk gladly, for the extreme labour they would have to undergo in the service of this House which was in such great need.' To Marie Claire in particular she added that 'she gave her no rule of discretion to observe but only that of a great charity which should oblige them all to forget their own interests and their health, in the endeavour to procure the salvation of souls; and that in the knowledge she had of her constitution she had already given her life to God, or at the least she had no doubt but that she would lose her health there, and that accordingly she showed her

¹ *Ib.*, p. 122.

the place and the bed which she had assigned to her, in one of the infirmaries of Port Royal, to pass there the remainder of her languishing life, after she should have worn out her strength in giving a good example to these poor Nuns, who required to be instructed by actions rather than by words.'¹

Matters did not come quite to this pass; one may hope also that the grim prognostication was relieved in the mouth of the Mère Angélique by a flash of playfulness or humour which the younger sister's fervid and literal imagination failed to catch. Even so, the speech is one of those forcible utterances, which the nuns sometimes record of their Mother, but which in her own written words are controlled always by judgement. And this spirit of unbridled self-sacrifice was the spirit in which she, and her young companions, set forth for Maubuisson. Her prophecy for Marie Claire was not indeed fulfilled literally, but both that sister and the Sister Isabelle-Agnès are said to have injured their health by their austere life and incessant labour in the convent. The Mother herself committed excesses beyond judgement in her passion for poverty and humility. A nun who left Maubuisson later for Port Royal was careful to preserve the memory of these things, and we know accordingly that the Mère Angélique chose for herself the worst cell of the dormitory, one 'previously always allotted to a servant or some poor Lay Sister who had no choice in the matter.' Not actually, like her cell at Port Royal, a passage room, it was yet close to a staircase which was in frequent use; it was unhealthy from proximity to the roof and to an ill-smelling pipe, through which there entered lizards and toads; further, it was almost quite dark. She resisted all attempts to make her change it, saying, 'this room was her only consolation; that when she was in it, it seemed to her she was in the grotto of Bethlehem, where one saw nothing outwardly but of which Jêsus Christ was the light. . . .'²

'In all other respects, since she settled everything, she took always for herself the most uncomfortable place, the worst bed and all that she could find that was worst.' The nun, a certain Sœur Candide, cited by Angélique de S. Jean, dilates with a true nun's satisfaction upon these virtues of mortification

Ib., pp. 132-3.

² Ib., p. 143.

in matters of food, dress, and work, and describes the austere and laborious life of the community formed under the Mother Angélique's hand. That community, be it understood, was composed of the new nuns and novices whom Angélique received, with the little band from Port Royal to marshal them, and was wholly distinct and apart from the original nuns, the 'Anciennes Dames', with their relaxed rule and mundane habits. Angélique would not force reform upon these ladies, or even urge it, beyond the first essential of the cloister, and hoped to win them by the example of this new and fervent sisterhood within their midst, a young and living Port Royal in the dead precincts of Maubuisson. Upon this community within a community she pinned all her hopes, looking there for a solution of her difficulties. She established for them the Rule in its full rigour—the disordered state of the convent's finances lending a hand, as we learn from her letters, to the prescribed abstinence. As at Port Royal, these nuns worked actively and their Abbess shared their labours:—

'She applied herself to all sorts of work indifferently, carrying wood to the kitchen and other parts of the House, sweeping the passages, the church, the dormitory, and the cloister, washing the dishes, carrying the linen and the wash to the garret, hoeing the garden,—and she did all that with so much show of joy, that it seemed as if she had no greater pleasure in the world, than to busy herself with her Nuns, in these mean and laborious services. She encouraged them in a manner full of cordiality and fervour, giving them little sayings to stir them; proffering to the one, as occasion fell, the example of Our Lord, to others the imitation of the holy Fathers, and encouraging others to mortify or humiliate themselves. Speaking to each according to her need, she promoted their spiritual edifice.'¹

In later years, some quarter of a century later, the nuns who had received this training used to say that in all these occupations they had felt no difficulty, although there were many delicate ones among them, so much did the example and words of the Mère Angélique encourage and animate them, and the very memory so renewed their joy that they could scarce leave the topic.

¹ *Ib.*, pp. 140-1.

‘The Mother Angélique, training these Nuns of Maubuisson to labour, took very great care to make them observe perfect silence. For this object, taking note of all things in general and in particular, she so regulated the occupations of each one, and proportioned the work so well to their strength and their capacity, that there was no need for much talking ; and they could do what they were ordered, without noise or confusion. I have often heard these Nuns say’ (it is the Sister Candide whom the narrative cites) ‘that she maintained such order in all things that, although there were the aforesaid number of old Nuns, who, far from having ever practised a life so regulated, had led one quite opposite, one would have said there was nothing to do in the Convent, all things went so smoothly. These old Nuns (*ces Anciennes*), though very hard to please, were waited upon, according to the Mother’s orders, by her new Sisters, with great care, great charity, great respect, and in a spirit of peace and humility, to edify and win them, that by this good example they might a little open their eyes and behold the virtue from which they were very remote. The Mother Angélique frequently exhorted her Nuns on this matter, making them see how important it was to teach to these Sisters by action that which could not be taught to them by words because they would not have borne it.’

This band of new nuns,—novices and postulants, as they all were as yet—, were kept in all things distinct from the old, dwelling with the Mother and the three nuns from Port Royal in a separate quarter, with a separate refectory and with separate religious observances, save for the church ceremonies which had to be performed in the church and in common with the ‘Anciennes’.

As at Port Royal, so at Maubuisson, Angélique had a special care for the devout and even beautiful performance of the services, a zeal which at Maubuisson was augmented by the desire to repair, as she said, the former irreverence, and which was, moreover, daily fanned by the need of outsinging the strong and discordant voices of the original nuns. For these ladies had the habit of singing all the service, though in so lamentable a manner, the recording nun says, ‘that it was difficult to know if they were singing or quarrelling.’¹

'The Mother Angélique sang herself hoarse (*se rompait l'estomac*), as did also her Nuns, trying to cover by their singing, performed with reverence, the undevout singing of the old Nuns; which could be done only by great effort. Every one was amazed that the Mother Angélique and her Nuns could stand the effort they had to make, which was continual from the opening of Matins to the close of Compline, every day, for the space of five years, in which the Mother Angélique displayed more patience, more charity and humility, than could be conceived; never showing the old Nuns what distress their singing gave her, dissimulating it prudently for fear of annoying them and making them think they were despised. For these Mothers were very sensitive and, when warned of something to be corrected, they easily took umbrage, fancying they were looked down upon. The Mother Angélique had need to be, as she was, in possession of an admirable patience, discretion, and charity, to gain their spirits and be able to be useful to their souls; and this was her chief aim, preferring to endure all this distress rather than hurt their feelings in the very least.'

Both the Mother and the young nuns suffered ill effects from this continual hard singing:—

'But that was of no account to them any more than to her, because their zeal and the fervour which the Mother had for the right celebration of the divine service made them suffer with joy all these pains, without tiring. She' (Angélique) 'was always concerned to have singing taught to new-comers. She went frequently to the place where they learnt, and incessantly urged the Mistresses to take great pains. When she thought they had neglected to teach some Nun well, she reproved them severely, and, judging that the Mother de la Croix' (that elder of her three companions, to whom she had given this sole office of teacher of singing) 'could not suffice for all in the manner she wished, she employed in it also Sister Marie Claire, her sister, although she had other occupations necessary enough, and might rather have been relieved in other affairs which she had to take on her shoulders. In fine, as regards the Nuns who were in her time at Maubuisson, one could not see a greater fervour than that which she had to cause the Divine Service to be celebrated with devotion and reverence, not at all in new chants and music, but simply in plain-song, according to the custom of the Order.'

'She was seen several times, while occupied with temporal affairs of considerable importance, to leave all to go and make a Sister repeat a response, when in doubt whether she had

learnt it well enough to repeat it in the choir, and not leave her until she knew it perfectly. When there were Sisters without talent, of whom the Mistresses despaired, it was they to whom she addressed herself the more and whom she recommended to the utmost care of the Mistresses, encouraging them and exhorting them not to grow weary, and encouraging also the poor girls in such a manner that all became easy to them. In truth they were not long in learning their singing, which they attributed to the charity the Mother had for them, having recognized that her words brought effect. For when she had said to these Sisters that they must take courage and that they would soon know what they had to learn, they became quite confident of it ; and it very often came to pass contrary to all human probability.

‘ This appeared in the person of a Novice, named Sister Angélique-Basilisse, a very good girl, but delicate, lame, and without voice to serve in the choir or any other talents necessary to make a girl without fortune accepted by the old Nuns, without whose consent she could not be allowed to Profess. The Mother Angélique, considering in Nuns rather the vocation and the virtue than money or talents of nature without grace, had great compassion and much charity for this good Sister. As she was one day speaking to her, she exhorted her to be of good courage, to trust in God, and to repeat certain special prayers to acquire a voice so that she might be allowed to profess. It happened some days after, that while, according to the counsel of the Mother, this girl was repeating her prayer with great fervour, she obtained the effect in such a manner that, going straight to the place where the others were learning to sing, she set to work to do the same and intoned a response. The Mistresses were very surprised to hear her, not knowing what it could be. But on inquiring they learnt it, and gave thanks to God with her, and attributed this favour to the prayer and faith of the Mother Angélique. This girl was professed, and, in place of the small amount of voice she had, very bad and very discordant, she received from God, by the intercession of the Holy Virgin to whom she had addressed herself, a very fine voice, very strong and very sweet ; so that after her Profession we have seen her fill the office of first singer until her death, and one was even moved to devotion on hearing her sing, on account of the sweetness of her voice.’

Effective, even to miracles, as was Angélique’s fervour and charity upon these Sisters she was training, and exemplary as was their conduct, the original community of Maubuisson

remained but partially touched by the virtue in their midst. They retained their mundane habits and appearance, their well-dressed hair ;—though the Mother would not force them to change, the spectacle was a constant offence to her love of poverty. It is possible the example of meekness and austerity overshot its mark a little, and seemed beyond emulation, though edifying. Not until the young Mother Marie des Anges resumed, after another interregnum, the work of reform at Maubuisson, were these ladies cajoled into the outward semblance of devout nuns, and given, with the orthodox veil, some touch of the conventual spirit.¹

Meanwhile, however, with one exception, they were reconciled to the new government as mitigated on their behalf, and accepted even, though with a sense of imprisonment, the strict enforcement of the cloister. Angélique won their suffrages from her first arrival with her familiar weapon of warm-hearted and cordial simplicity.

The little band from Port Royal had reached Maubuisson at an hour of Church Service, and overheard the nuns singing in that lamentable manner which was so like quarrelling.²

‘ So soon as they had finished, they assembled at the door to receive M. de Cîteaux and the Mother Angélique, whom they saluted at first with respect, but in a manner somewhat cold ; until the Mother, receiving them with the kindness and frankness which were so natural to her, at once opened their heart, and they began to discover that reform had not rendered her so barbarous as they had pictured ; of which they were yet further persuaded, when they saw that, meeting one of them named Mme Desmarêts, she was for embracing her, and said to her gaily : “ *Good day, my great friend.*” For she remembered that she had called her this when she was a child and little Nun, and that these good Mothers loved these little endearments, nearly all having such alliances of friendship one with another. Thus they were so delighted with this frankness and this gaiety on the part of the Mother that, believing themselves escaped, as it were, from the hands of that chimeric monster of a frightful and savage reform, as they

¹ Cf. *Modèle de Foi et de Patience*, pp. 55-7.

² *Relation . . . de la Vie de la Mère Marie-Angélique Arnauld . . . par la Mère Angélique de S. Jean Arnauld*, Mémoires pour servir . . . , vol. i, p. 124 seq.

had conceived that of Port Royal, they began to recognize her and to show her more tokens of affection and of joy because of her arrival than they had given her before signs of their fear and of their coldness.

‘All the first days passed in gently taming the spirits of these poor Sisters, who did not yet know what they were to expect from the new government. The Mother Angélique began by treating them with unparalleled kindness, renewing with them all her old acquaintance, and acting with all sorts of tokens of friendship towards them. Among other things she was very diligent in going to see one of the old Nuns named Madame le Vasseur, who was a good woman and had been her Mistress formerly when she was little, but who had become blind some years before. She lavished upon her every conceivable caress, and did her all sorts of service, making a point, all the Lent of that year, of going to see her every evening and taking with her her supper, which consisted of the bread of the Lay Sisters (for she would not eat that of the Convent, which was finer), together with seven or eight leaves of wild chicory, all raw, without oil or vinegar. She would not even have them served in a dish, but, making a hollow in the piece of bread that was brought her, she put in it this salad so easily seasoned.

‘She rejoiced the heart of this good old Nun, comforting her for her blindness and trying by her gentleness to win her to God. She did much the same in regard to all the others, who were in such astonishment at seeing her life and her conduct, as also that of her Nuns, that they seemed to them creatures from a new world; so few examples had they seen of a life so saintly and so religious, or rather, so far removed was this life from all they had hitherto seen in their House. A Sister from there, who was at that time a Secular at Maubuisson, where she waited upon the good blind Nun above mentioned, told me recently, that all the persons of the House had such an admiration of the piety, the mortification, and the modesty which showed even in the dress, the countenance, the ways and the smallest actions of these new Nuns, that they regarded them as prodigies; that they were never weary of looking at them; and that often she and other Secular Women who were in the House would make rendezvous to go and gaze upon them somewhere, where they could see them; such was their satisfaction and devotion in the mere sight of their modesty and of all their appearance, which was so religious and so edifying.’

But it was another matter to instil the religious spirit into

these original nuns of Maubuisson, however their affections might be won or their admiration stirred. They had most of them been made nuns against the grain and their vows had no meaning for them. They were of an 'inconceivable ignorance, not of the duties only, but of the first elements of Christianity and the chief mysteries of the faith':—

'They did not know even how to confess, but they used to present themselves for that purpose to a Bernardine Monk who was their Confessor, and who indeed deserved the name, since he it was who alone made their confession and named for them the sins he desired them to say, even though it might be they had not committed them. All he could bring them to, was to pronounce *yes* or *no*, upon which he gave them absolution without further inquiry. But at length, being tired of the reproaches which this *Pater* addressed them for their ignorance, they conceived they had found an excellent method for confessing well. This was to compose all together, with much study, three kinds of confessions, one for the great Feasts, one for Sundays, and one for week-days, which they wrote out in a book and lent to one another as they went to confess in succession ; though they might as well have done it all at once, since they all repeated the same thing.'

Their manner of chanting the service has already been touched on ; that singing 'was with such a terrible precipitation and such discord, that so far from distinguishing any word in what they said, it was much if one could recognize at first, in this horrible confusion, that it was human voices.'

'They spent all their time apart from the service—which, thus performed, did not take much—in amusing themselves in every way that they could, in entertaining the visitors who came to see them and who freely entered the Convent with as much liberty as they might have done a secular House of the country nobility, in dramatic performances for the pleasure of their guests, and so in all they could think of.

'Many of them had their private gardens, with summer-houses for meals ; and what proves more than all that the disorder of this House was not personal, but had passed into a well-established custom, is that on summer days when it was fine weather, after having repeated Vespers and Compline both together, as hastily as possible, the Prioress used to take all the convent beyond the Abbey, to go for walks by the ponds that are along the high road to Paris ; where frequently

the Monks of S. Martin of Pontoise, who are hard by, came to dance with these Nuns, and that with the same freedom that one would do the thing to which of all others there is nothing to object.

‘It would be highly useless,’ the niece’s narrative continues, ‘to enter into further particulars, since from these liberties, which were so public, may easily be inferred the rest, which it is much better to suppress. What we have said suffices to show, in general, what work awaited the Mother Angélique, in this vineyard which the Providence of God had sent her to cultivate.’

The nuns were very unwilling to lose any of this ‘liberty which might be called libertinism, which they loved beyond all things.’

The Mother Angélique had, however :—

‘so much skill in winning them, that in a short time, and under the authority of M. de Cîteaux, she began to establish enclosure, forbidding admission to Seculars, and causing parlours to be made and setting grilles. The seniors having accepted it quietly, although it seemed very hard to see themselves, as they thought, made in a manner prisoners, the others submitted also ; and they had already so much love and respect for the Mother Angélique that they dared not refuse her in anything.’

This fundamental reform was, in the eyes of that Mother, but the first step. It was all, however, that she would impose by authority, or even by persuasion. For the rest, she trusted to the influence that the new nuns, whose virtues she now turned to foster in their midst, should gradually exercise upon the *Anciennes*. She left these in undisturbed enjoyment of all privileges and possessions that were consistent with observance of the cloister,—their titles, their mundane attire, provocative though this was of her sin of impatience.

As regards the ‘conversion’ of these ladies, Angélique had, as observed, to contend not only with their long habits of self-indulgence, but also with the secret antagonism of the monks. On accepting the charge, she had drawn up a scheme of rules she thought should be enforced ; the General approved it and sent it, in his own name, to Maubuisson. But the monk, his secretary, commissioned to take it, told all the nuns privately that they need not look upon it as coming from the

General, but from Mme de Port Royal, who had composed it, and that accordingly they could do about it as they pleased. And, what was worse, their Confessor, a venerable monk expressly appointed by the General to be the Mother Angélique's coadjutor in the work of reform, so far from supporting her in her trying position of temporary and doubtful authority, openly sided, when occasion offered, with the deposed Abbess, Mme d'Estrées. The incident, which took place when Angélique had been some eighteen months at Maubuisson, is a stirring one in convent annals.

Among these original nuns, one remained wholly unreconciled to the new rule, and desirous of the return of the former Abbess. This nun, Mme de la Serre by name, was remarkable among them all by the vanity and singularity of her dress, as also of her carriage and gait. At the time of the visit of François de Sales to Maubuisson, she had attracted the attention of that Bishop's brother, M. de Boissy, who, 'learning that she was a woman of intelligence, but of a proud, haughty, and artful spirit, was moved to try and win her to God.' But neither persuasion, nor strong admonition of the divine wrath, could induce her to abandon the vanity of her dress.¹ She was engaged, indeed, in other schemes than her own spiritual conversion, seeking nothing less than the forcible return of Mme d'Estrées and of the old misrule.

With the connivance of this nun and the goodwill, if not the active aid, of the Confessor, Mme d'Estrées accomplished now a bold stroke:—

'Very few days after the Bishop of Geneva (François de Sales) left Maubuisson, which was at the beginning of September, Mme d'Estrées, who ever since her removal had continuously sued to be restored to her Abbey, and who was, so it is said, on the point of gaining her suit, through the leading of God Who directs all things to His purposes herself destroyed all the hopes she might have had of her restoration through the paths of justice, by a violent and imprudent enterprise.'²

On September the 10th, 1619, having escaped from the *Filles Pénitentes*, and supported by her brother-in-law, the Comte

¹ *Relation . . . par la Mère Angélique de S. Jean*: p. 157.

² *Ib.*, 160 seq.

de Sanzé (the gentleman to whom, be it remembered, she had arbitrarily married her young sister), and by sundry other gentlemen, she arrived at Maubuisson at six in the morning and sought admission at the gate of the courtyard, called the door of the alder-plot (*porte de l'aunaie*). The porter refused to open, whereupon they forced the door, doing injury to the porter, whose cries for help were heard in the adjacent church, though their meaning did not penetrate. He, poor man, terrified at the violence and threats, did not venture to enter the House, but had the happy thought of going, 'all wounded as he was,' to Paris, to give M. Arnauld notice of the affair.

At the door of the church, Mme d'Estrées was awaited by the aforementioned nun, Mme de la Serre, who had procured a counter-key (as came out in the subsequent inquiry, she had given an impression of wax to the locksmith), and who now admitted her:—

'At the same time that Mme d'Estrées entered by the great door of the Church, the Mother Angélique issued from a Confessional that was close to that same door; in such a manner that she met her face to face. She was not disconcerted at a thing so little expected, and Mme d'Estrées, first to speak, said to her with a countenance all moved, "*Madame, you have filled my place long enough. I have come back to my House—you must leave it.*" The Mother Angélique answered her with firmness: "*Madame, I am quite ready to do so, when they who set me here remove me.*" The other responded angrily that she should leave, and repeated it several times. But the Mother, without exciting herself and without making further reply, followed her for the time being, and escorted her from the Church to her apartment in the Abbey.

'Mme d'Estrées, on entering her room, where the Mother Angélique was now dwelling, and which consequently formed part of the infirmary,—since at no time could the Mother have anything peculiar to herself or that was not open to all who had need of it,—she (Mme d'Estrées) found it in bad enough order, with two mattresses on the floor upon which were lying two of the Mother Angélique's Nuns, who had taken medicine that day. Mme d'Estrées proceeded at once to say with disdain: "*Let them take away all these dirty things from my room. What is all this filth?*" The Mother said to her coldly: "*Madame, if your room is in bad order, the fault is very excusable—you were not expected.*"

'She left her presently in her room, and went to set various things in order, such as locking up papers and arranging other affairs, well foreseeing what might happen. But she did not forget to go herself to the kitchen, to have a decent dinner prepared for Mme d'Estrées'; and above all to see that the new Sisters whom she had received should be ready to do all they had to without disturbance and without confusion.'

While thus readily yielding precedence in things temporal and personal, Angélique was firm in asserting her lead and control in the divine service:—

'Afterwards the Mother attended Tierce and High Mass, which she caused to be very solemnly sung. Mme d'Estrées attended also, but she did not venture to enter the choir; and the Mother Angélique, before her very face, had the courage to occupy as usual the Abbess' chair; which so incensed her that she could not refrain from saying, in a rage, "*What insolence! here is my Pupil taking my place in my presence.*" But the old Nuns of the House, who already almost all loved the Mother Angélique, were enchanted that she performed this act without timidity. The Mother and most of her Nuns communicated at this Mass, to be prepared for whatever it should please God might happen to them; and subsequently they occupied themselves in peace, each in what she had to do, until dinner.

'Mme d'Estrées, for her part, went all over the House; and, in view of her re-establishment, sought to regain her footing with the Nuns. She sent for one of the seniors, named Mme Desmarêts, who was Portress and Cellarer, and her assistant named Mme Dupuis, whom she tried to gain over, because they were all for the Mother Angélique . . . She commanded them, in presence of the Mother Angélique, to restore the keys. These two good Nuns answered her, that they had given them up into the hands of Madame, meaning the Mother Angélique, which so incensed Mme d'Estrées that, having asked them angrily, if there were any other *Madame* in that House than herself, she dismissed them and desired to see them no more.

'The dinner hour having arrived, the Mother Angélique, after causing that of Mme d'Estrées to be served, repaired with her Nuns to their usual refectory; and before seating herself she said to them all: "My Sisters, we do not know what may happen to us to-day. All things are in the hand of God. We must commit ourselves to Him. Perhaps we shall be obliged to go on foot out of this House. We must be

prepared for all. But for that very reason, all must try to eat in order to have strength if God will that we have trial." Thereupon she set herself at table. The reading was performed during dinner, and the customary graces were sung, without considering that Mme d'Estrées could hear them from her room, which was above, and that she would not fail to mock at these novelties.'

After dinner came the trial of strength. The Confessor, Dom Sabbatier, now openly siding with Mme d'Estrées, tried to persuade the Mother Angélique to retire peaceably without awaiting the violence of which the Comte de Sanzé and his followers were capable, seeking to intimidate her by an exaggerated report of their threats. She replied firmly that there could be no question of deliberation; that, if force were used, she must yield to it, but that, short of force, nothing except the order of those who had set her in authority could justify her in leaving the precincts and breaking the cloister.

Then, assembling her nuns to prepare them, she said to them, 'My Sisters, one must commend oneself greatly to God: We are in the hands of a madman' (the Comte de Sanzé had that reputation), 'but the heart of man is in the hands of God.'

Mme d'Estrées now came to her and tried, like the Confessor, to persuade her to depart quietly, but, receiving the same answer,—that, even had she no other ground for awaiting the legitimate command, the law of the cloister would forbid her to leave—, she proposed that they should both go to the Church. The Mother, without betraying any suspicion of her design, assented: 'Let us go, Madame, we could be nowhere better.'

'They went thither accordingly, both. All the Nuns of the Mother Angélique followed her. On arrival, the Mother and her company began to pray God and ask His aid. Madame d'Estrées, who, for her part, was wholly occupied in finding means of establishing her claims, tried to induce the old Nuns to take part in making the Mother leave, or, if they could not persuade her to go voluntarily, to help in expelling her by force. She spoke to this end for a long time in a low voice, to the Prioress among others.'

But these 'Ancients' would not abet her.

Mme d'Estrées was reduced accordingly to make the scan-

dalous scene she would have preferred to avoid. She began by loud and angry command to the Mother to depart on the spot, receiving the previous answer. Then she tried to force her towards the main door, but the Mother stood firm, and all her novices clustered round her and held her. 'They each put a hand into my belt'—in after life she narrated the scene to her nephew—'which so squeezed me, I thought I should be suffocated.'¹ These young girls were not so well drilled to modesty as to contain themselves at the sight of offence to their beloved Mother. They came to something like a most undignified scuffle with Mme d'Estrées. The Mother Angélique, herself impassive, was held back by her nuns, forced forward by Mme d'Estrées. In the conflict the latter pulled her veil as though about to tear it off; whereupon, to quote the Mother's expression, 'the Nuns, who had been lambs, became lions.' One of them, a tall girl of good birth, advanced upon Mme d'Estrées, and retaliated by tearing off her veil and her entire coiffure, addressing her: 'What! Wretch that you are, have you the boldness to wish to take the veil from Mme de Port Royal? Ah! I know you, I know what you are.' Mme d'Estrées called the old nuns to the rescue, but they fled, desiring to take no part in this affair—whereupon she came to extremities, and cried at the top of her voice for the Comte de Sanzé; 'Help, my brother, they are killing me!'

At this signal, the accomplice nun, Mme de la Serre, opened the Church door with her key, and the Count and his companions entered sword in hand, one firing a pistol with intention to frighten. Unsuccessful in striking terror into the bold and now excited band of nuns, or in persuading her to move voluntarily, they forced Angélique to the door. And she, as she owns in her reminiscences,² was glad enough to be forced, and yielded imperceptibly, finding it high time to bring her nuns safely out of such company.

In all this tumult, one nun played a distinctive part. The Sister Anne Eugénie, whom we left at Port Royal too joyous after profession to weep for the Mother's departure, had fallen

¹ *Entretiens... avec M. le Maître*, Mémoires pour servir..., vol. ii, p. 285.

² *Ib.*, p. 286.

ill shortly after and was now at Maubuisson, by invitation of the community, for the benefit of the healthier air. And she now, while the rest were in full excitement, remained silent, without saying a word,—it is Angélique who observes—, ‘praying to God in all this noise.’¹ She made one, however, of the band that accompanied the Mother to the door.

It was no part of Mme d’Estrées’ intention to let out any nuns save those who had come from Port Royal, or to have more scandal than she could avoid. At the door, accordingly, the struggle began again, no longer to expel the Mother, but to restrain the young Sisters from following her. Again their lion-like qualities came into play. A carriage stood ready in the courtyard for the Mother Angélique and her companions, four with the Sister Anne Eugénie, from Port Royal. But as they entered, three of the original nuns of Maubuisson pressed after, and as many of the new Sisters as could enter. Others climbed on the box, and behind on the imperial, like footmen; and the remainder hung on to the wheels. Mme d’Estrées told the coachman to drive on, but he refused, for fear of killing the nuns.

Then Angélique, reflecting moreover that there was no knowing where the carriage would take them, redescended and the rest with her; was forced now on foot to the outermost gate of the Abbey, where Mme d’Estrées set a man to prevent the nuns following, while she herself issued, drawing the Mother Angélique after. But a courageous young novice addressed this gatekeeper so boldly:—

‘and told him in so resolute a tone that if he tried to prevent them from leaving, they would all crush him against the door, that the poor man was afraid. At the same instant, another very strong Nun pushed back the door and went through; and, to prevent Mme d’Estrées from returning and shutting them in, she seized her by the waist, seated her on the grass and held her so, until all the Novitiate were through. The porter was so crushed behind the door as they thronged past that, far from resisting them, he was himself unable to stir.’²

¹ *Relation . . . par la Mère Marie-Angélique, Mémoires pour servir . . .*, vol. i, p. 296.

² *Relation . . . par la Mère Angélique de S. Jean*, loc. cit., vol. i, pp. 170–1.

Three of the original nuns of Maubuisson were of this company, which was composed in the main of the young girls received and trained by the Mother Angélique—more than thirty persons in all. Two only of these new-comers were left behind, one of whom had just taken full vows, and was retained by a scruple of conscience,—at such violence to her feelings that she fainted and had to be carried into the house. The other was a girl engaged there to work, whom the Mother had accepted as postulant, and who had been all day absent in the dairy, returning from her work in ignorance of the whole affair to find her Abbess and associates gone. This girl insisted upon following after, ‘she being no Nun, nor Mme d’Estrées her Abbess,’ and rejoined the band in the evening at Pontoise, bringing with her a very welcome gold coin she happened to find on the way.

The Mother Angélique, thus unexpectedly on the road with her nuns, retained her full presence of mind and practical common sense. She arranged them all in procession—postulants, novices, and the seven professed nuns bringing up the rear with herself—and in this orderly file they marched two and two to the nearest town, Pontoise. They walked in silence and modesty, the Sister Anne Eugénie repeating her rosary as placidly and devoutly as if she had been taking part in the procession round the Port Royal cloister. At the suburb Angélique made them all take ‘cordial waters’ as precaution against the pest which was in the town. That their entrance might be more modest, she improvised veils out of the skirt of one of the postulants, which she cut off round the waist, leaving the poor girl with the black bodice of her dress and the green petticoat that she wore underneath.

At Pontoise the nuns received all hospitality, help and respect. The people knelt in the streets as the procession passed, blessing ‘good Mme de Port Royal, who had left the Démon behind her at Maubuisson.’ They entered the first church they came to, that of the Jesuits, and there the Grand Vicar and another Jesuit (M. Duval, doctor), both her friends, came to consider the best steps to take. It was decided not to accept the hospitality speedily proffered by the various convents but to remain together in a body in the Vicarage, which the

Grand Vicar put at their disposal. Charitable persons in the town provided all necessary,—Angélique rejoicing to receive alms, like the genuine poor—, and the Vicarage assumed speedily the aspect of a convent.

The Abbess' first solicitude was that her flock should not suffer morally from all this excitement and stir, and should resume at once their regular and sequestered manner of life :—

' Scarcely had she entered the house than she began already to think how she should establish enclosure and of the means of adapting the quarters, not knowing how long they would have to remain, and taking heed, with her usual charity, that this change might bring no ill to her flock, over whom she watched with unparalleled solicitude. All her Nuns were already so well trained to regularity, that in an instant they were at home in the Grand-Vicarage as though in their Convent, each falling into the place assigned her and executing there her practices of piety in an admirable meditative silence.

' On the morrow they heard Mass in the Chapel, and the Mother Angélique communicated. They sang Vespers and numbers of people came to hear them. Afterwards they performed their orisons, all admiring the virtue and regularity of so many young girls who appeared to them like Angels in their modesty, and whom so much occasion of distraction had not withdrawn from the spirit of mortification and of retreat, in which they had been raised by the care of the Mother Angélique.' ¹

The exodus was, however, but brief. News of the affair had already reached Paris through the medium of the wounded porter of Maubuisson ; provost and archers were at once in request, and Mme d'Estrées was re-expelled the very next morning. She did not wait to be caught, but fled through a little private gate which she had already, in that day's sojourn, had the foresight to have unbricked and reopened. Her brother-in-law and his friends also took flight ; only the accomplice nun, Mme de la Serre, had not time to escape, but hid in a high cupboard in the wall, concealed by tapestry, where she could not for the moment be found. After spending the day in vain search, the provost and a part of his troop—a hundred archers remaining to guard the Abbey—came to

¹ *Relation . . . par la Mère Angélique de S. Jean*, pp. 176 seq.

beg the Mother Angélique to resume the government, and to escort her and the nuns back to Maubuisson.

'It was nearly ten at night when the Provost reached Pontoise. But as it was desirable to lose no time, the Mother Angélique gave order on the instant that all the Nuns should get ready to leave. The night was no hindrance, for it was changed into full day by the quantity of torches brought by the whole town, whom curiosity and piety had assembled to witness this new event. All the Curés of the town and all the Ecclesiastics were present, and desired to accompany this strange procession. The thirty Nuns of the Mother Angélique walked in order, two and two, and by their side two rows of Archers on horseback, each carrying a torch in his hand and a musquet on the shoulder. The Mother Angélique walked after, and beside her the Provost of the Island¹ with a number of Guards, who formed an escort, because they feared—and especially for her person—the violence of those gentlemen who supported Mme d'Estrées, some of whom were very insolent and very audacious. The whole town followed with lights, and never was there seen a more illustrious procession than this, for the novelty and for the piety of the persons who afforded the spectacle to the rest.'²

The archers remained to guard the monastery all night, within and without, in case Mme d'Estrées' adherents might be concealed there. The Mother Angélique and her nuns spent this night in watching, 'some preparing food for the guards in the kitchen, in an edifying modest silence, and the remainder, the Mother took heed, retiring in good order.'

Towards morning, the archers posted in the dormitory heard a strange blowing of the nose, 'as of some one who had been crying,' and tapping the walls whence the sound seemed to come, by this means discovered poor Mme de la Serre in her high cupboard. She was dislodged, not without difficulty, put under lock and key, and in the course of time transferred to another convent. In the course of time, too, but not till years later, Maubuisson saw her again, and saw her, under the rule and influence of the Mother Angélique's young follower, Marie des Anges, at length touched and converted, and brought to a meek end.³ As for Mme d'Estrées, she

¹ The *Prévôt de l'Isle* was the officer responsible for the safety of the highways in Paris and the vicinity.

² *Relation*, &c., pp. 179–80.

³ *Modèle de Foi et de Patience*, p. 63 seq.

too was captured, escaped and was recaptured several times, without however reappearing at Maubuisson. She passed the remainder of her life, and spent a pension which that convent allowed her, in litigating for the recovery of her rights, and died finally in a somewhat wretched condition in a suburb of Paris. The charity of Port Royal hoped some gleam of final repentance from the discovery of books of piety among her effects, mixed up with title-deeds stolen from Maubuisson. But she was seen once at least in lusty impenitence, by a monk who visited her when she was confined in the Châtelet, regaling in bed upon wine and sausages.

For some little while Maubuisson was in a disturbed state, the friends of Mme d'Estrées making hostile demonstrations, shooting at the convent windows and so forth, and the archers remaining to protect. But Angélique dismissed these so soon as possible, before indeed the nuns thought her dear person safe, and things resumed their normal course. For three years longer she continued her rule, in zealous ward over her new flock, in conciliatory but little-fruitful intercourse with the old nuns, in suppressed antagonism with the monks. Then at length Mme d'Estrées' claims were disposed of; the King appointed a new permanent Abbess, and Angélique was free to return to Port Royal. The new Abbess, Mme de Soissons, a lady of quality, as befitted the Royal Abbey of Maubuisson, was highly respectable, and reputed devout, but, alas! as remote as the former one from the spirit of austere simplicity initiated by the Mère Angélique.

Mme de Soissons had a devout reputation in the Convent of Fontevrault, where she was nun, and Angélique had been, it seems, instrumental in her appointment, pointing out, when the office was proposed to herself, that an Abbess of high birth was needed to withstand the pretensions of Mme d'Estrées. It must have been the more grievous to find how little sympathy of spirit there was between them, and how little hope for the furtherance of Reform. The new Abbess showed her at first all esteem, but was wholly under the influence of a nun who was opposed to Reform and who skilfully sowed disunion between them until not all Angélique's warm-hearted charity could melt the ice. It was of no avail

that she nursed Mme de Soissons through an attack of smallpox, catching the malady and nearly losing an eye,—she was saved by a miracle, remembers the niece, writing, however, too long after to recover the detail.¹ Neither was it of any avail that, by a concession harder to her than this act of charity, she wore a new and more seemly dress in the new Abbess' honour.²

With Mme de Soissons, Maubuisson took on a new phase. This Abbess was a person of piety in her way, given to fasting and other bodily mortification, to the injury even of her health. But her self-love found other than material vents, and precisely such as were most contrary to the spirit of the Mother Angélique. 'The Bourgeoises of S. Antoine, the Ladies of Maubuisson, the Nuns of Port Royal,' were the respective titles given by the Cistercian monks to these three sets of women in their Order;³ and Mme de Soissons, true to her title, insisted upon all the prerogatives of her rank. The Mother Angélique discarded even the customary title of Madame; she took her charge as that of servant to the community, seeking precedence only in poverty and in labour. Mme de Soissons let her nuns kneel as they entered her room, approach her still on their knees, and address her with every conceivable reverence and ceremony. She was, however, suave and affable, and of personal charm, and the novices—some dozen—whom she received, adored her in a species of cult. They sought, so they owned after her death, to please her in all their acts, even in their devotion, which took the form of fine singing and fantastic processions, with flowing hair and crowns of thorns, about the garden.⁴ The old nuns of Maubuisson, for their part, continued their easy and privileged ways, untouched by the new practices as they had been by the abstemious and laborious life of Angélique's nuns. As for that flock, they left Maubuisson with their Mother, to be received in their poverty open-armed by the Community at Port Royal.

¹ *Relation . . . de la Mère Angélique de S. Jean*, Mémoires pour servir . . . , vol. i, p. 200.

² *Ib.*, vol. ii, p. 147.

³ *Entretiens . . . avec M. le Maître*, loc. cit., vol. ii, p. 292.

⁴ *Modèle de Foi et de Patience*, p. 17 seq.

With the advent of Mme de Soissons Angélique continues her narrative, passing in silence the stirring events which we, tempted by the minute detail given us by Angélique the niece and gleaned from the after reminiscences of those well-trained but wide-awake young novices, have dwelt upon at more length, perhaps, than their intrinsic worth deserves. The Mother herself spoke of them to her nephew, in reference to the Confessor's bad conduct, and again in a species of indictment she had occasion to draw up against the monks of the Order, and yet again, in the long digressions of this very narrative, in allusion to the rapt fervour, during that scene in the church, of her sister Anne Eugénie; but she gives them no place in the main course of events.

She had spoken last, it may be remembered, of her intercourse with S. François de Sales.

Narrative of the Mère Angélique (continued)

'When I learnt that the King had appointed a Nun of quality (Mme de Soissons) to succeed the Abbess, who had already been deposed by two sentences passed, I obtained leave for her to come there (to Maubuisson) while awaiting the third sentence, to see what might be hoped from her government, and that I might prepare quietly for departure; since I was weary of staying so long in a place where there was so little likelihood of setting things on a solid basis. I remained thirteen months with her, continuing to govern the House, for she could not have the Bulls until the final sentence had been passed, and, since I saw that I was no longer of any service, God having permitted some misunderstanding which arose, not from the future Abbess, but from a Nun she had brought with her, I asked permission of M. de Citeaux to retire.

'One of the complaints raised against me was that I had filled the House with Nuns without dower, and that thus I took away the power of having great splendour in the Church, as was befitting a Royal House such as that.' (Mme de Soissons applied the injurious term of beggar-girls (*gueuses*) to these nuns, 'wounding thereby,' as Angélique says, speaking of the matter to her nephew, 'both their feelings and hers.') 'I replied to this complaint that I had done that which the Superiors had charged me to do; but that, if they found a House with thirty thousand *livres* a year too heavily burdened by thirty Nuns, I should not esteem ours, worth only six, inconvenienced by receiving them. These poor girls

earnestly begged me to take them, and I wrote to our Sisters, begging them to tell me if they would have the courage to share their poverty with thirty Sisters. They wrote me a letter signed by all, in which they said that they would receive with joy all that I should be pleased to bring them. I forwarded the letter to our General, and asked permission, which I received with more joy than I can express. Thereupon I got ready to depart.

I wrote to my mother, who was now a widow, for my father had died three years earlier, imploring her to bring me carriages to transport these Sisters to Port Royal; and I closed my letter by begging her very humbly not to grant my petition unless God inspired her to do so, and she could do it from her heart. She did not fail to attend on the day appointed, with sufficient carriages and sufficient women to escort these Sisters. I sent them to Port Royal, and I myself went to Paris, because certain persons had counselled me to transfer there our House, which was very unhealthy, and because my mother greatly desired it. She took me accordingly thither to consult how it could be managed. I saw no great likelihood, and returned on the 11th or 12th of March, 1623, to Port Royal, where our Sisters received me with great joy, not only to see me again, but also because pleased with the Nuns I had sent them, as though with them there had come a greater increase of benefit than of burden.

‘I applied myself at once to make fresh small accommodations, to lodge these thirty Sisters of Maubuisson; for we were singularly crowded, having only thirteen cells in the dormitory, while we were more than sixty. I had some very poor ones made, of wooden partitions filled up with earth and straw. The grandeur of the House I had just left, and its riches, had so well taught me that these unhappy thorns choke the word of God, and I had seen such curse and detestable monuments of vice, which had destroyed those of the piety of the holy Queen (Blanche of Castille, mother of S. Louis) who had founded that House, that I loved poverty the more tenderly. I had nurtured these Sisters I had received, so far as it was possible to me, in the love of this virtue. And truly they had for it so great affection that they were enchanted to find themselves in this poor House, and in the profound peace which was there.’

The thirty dowerless young nuns reached the convent, whose charity they had invoked, tongue-tied. Angélique, watchful always against occasion for idle talk and dissipation of spirit, had bidden them be silent from the first glimpse of

Port Royal until her own later coming. She enjoined them to this end that, so soon as, turning the brow of the hill, they should catch sight of the convent steeple, in its deep and narrow valley, they should repeat all together this verse, *Pone, Domine, custodiam ori meo, et ostium circumstantiæ labiis meis*; and that, from that moment, the door of their lips should remain closed until she herself should come to open it. As it was needful, however, that they should be known at Port Royal, she made each attach a ticket to her sleeve, with her name upon it. They punctually observed these orders, and arrived at Port Royal on March the 3rd, 1623.

‘It was a Feast-day for the Mother Agnès and for the whole Community, of whom may be said on this occasion what the Apostle said of the faithful of Macedon, that their profound poverty shed abroad in abundance the riches of their sincere charity. For not only did they open their arms with all their heart to receive this great number of Sisters, but more, as if it had been they themselves who had obtained an extraordinary favour, they sang the *Te Deum* as they went to receive and embrace this present that God made them, to enrich their House more and more with the inexhaustible treasure of poverty.

‘This House, so inconvenient and so small, became all at once large by the breadth of the charity of those who were well pleased to be inconvenienced for the ease of others, and beautiful for the gratification found in it by these poor girls, who sought only Jesus Christ crucified, and found Him in this tomb where they were as it were buried from the rest of the world, from which this House was in complete remoteness.

‘The Mother Angélique meanwhile was at Paris several days, as she says in her narrative, and spent some of them in the Convent of the Visitation in the *rue de S. Antoine*; for as yet there was only that first House. She returned to Port Royal in Holy Week, the 11th or 12th of March; and on her arrival she loosed the tongues of these thirty mutes, who had not said a word while waiting for her. They had only held out their arm when it was a question of some one of them, that it might be read upon their sleeve who they were, that they could be employed in whatsoever they were wanted to do. The Mother Angélique opened them the door which she had closed; but it was only to greet her and to re-enter speedily into the customary silence in which she had nurtured this great Novitiate, who resembled that ancient Tabernacle which

was transported and re-established wherever God caused His people to encamp in the desert. For all these Sisters were so fashioned in regularity, silence and meditation (*recueillement*) that, whether at Maubuisson, at Pontoise, or at Port Royal, from the first day that they arrived, they were ordered and regular, as though they had never stirred thence.¹

It is pleasant to read also—the Mother Angélique herself mentions it to her nephew—that for once the Nuns of Port Royal made a Feast of a more material kind. They not only sang the *Te Deum* in welcome of these Sisters from Maubuisson ; they regaled them also with carp from their pond, to the great surprise of the newcomers, who had anticipated, from their poverty, only a meagre diet of garden herbs.²

¹ *Relation . . . de la Mère Angélique de S. Jean*, Mémoires pour servir . . . , vol. i, p. 203 seq.

² *Entretiens de la Mère Angélique avec M. le Maître*, loc. cit., vol. ii, p. 372.

CHAPTER VI

The Mère Agnès.—Comparison of the two sisters, Agnès and Angélique.—
Port Royal under their joint rule.—Their youngest sister, Madelon,
enters the Convent, and also Madame Arnauld, their mother.

PORT ROYAL meanwhile, under the care of the Mère Agnès, had been quietly and steadily confirmed in the spirit and practice initiated by Angélique, so that when the latter returned it was as to a haven of repose and fellowship. Her intercourse with it had not been completely broken and she had herself been back on more than one occasion during those five years' absence, notably when her sister Agnès took possession, in September, 1620, as coadjutrix :—

‘I was as gay at it,’ Angélique relates to her nephew, ‘as she was sad. The *Te Deum* was sung, and I sang so hard that I made myself hoarse. I advanced by her side to the Book of Chants which has to be opened (as one of the ceremonies of taking possession); and as she saw me gay and smiling at the opening of the Book, and she had found, *Isti sunt duo olivæ et duo candelabrae* (these are the two olive-trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth), she said to me on the spot: “My Mother, do not rejoice so greatly, I shall not remain here alone. We shall be two, you will be here as well as I. Look, see what I have found on opening the Book—*Isti sunt duo olivæ . . .*”’¹

The prophecy was duly fulfilled. The two sisters remained, with one brief period of divergence, companion and complementary spirits at Port Royal until, after Angélique's death, Agnès was left alone, an aged and venerable Mother, to bear the main brunt of the storm that broke over the convent.

‘It seems,’ the Mother Angélique de S. Jean, their niece and worthy successor, wrote of these two sisters, ‘that God, in the gifts He had assigned them, had distributed them diversely in order that their guidance might be useful to every

¹ *Entretiens . . . avec M. le Maître*, Mémoires pour servir . . ., vol. ii, p. 268.



L. A. R. MERE CATHERINE AGNES DE S. PAUL ARNAVLD cy devant
 l'abbaye de Port Royal. Elle est morte le 19 Fevrier 1671 en odeur de tres grande piété.
 De l'œuvre de l'abbaye de Port Royal. Par l'abbaye de Port Royal. Par l'abbaye de Port Royal.

THE MÈRE AGNÈS

From engraving of portrait by Philippe de Champaigne

kind of person. In the Mother Angélique there appeared a burning charity, vigorous and tender, which was able to abase and to exalt itself at need, which made itself feared and made itself loved, which had the secret of overturning all by its force and of again raising all by its goodness. In the Mother Agnès on the contrary one saw an ever uniform equanimity, a wisdom ever the same, a gravity accompanied by gentleness, which inspired confidence and respect, and taught as much by silence as by words.'¹

Angélique's 'so prompt impetuosity' was indeed, by the discipline of years, not so much checked as transformed. It appeared to the last as this burning zeal for the spiritual advancement of others; she was to the last tempted by impatience, no longer at opposition to her views and designs, but at the evidence of lukewarmness or unconscious hypocrisy in professing Christians. To the last also she regretted that she yielded too readily to these zealous impulses, apt to provoke resentment, instead of waiting for the more efficacious movement of grace in the offender.

The nuns testified that, forcible and unsparing as were her reproofs, none ever left her presence without fresh courage and resolve to new effort. But there were persons who acknowledged that they were better suited by the Mother Agnès. The nephew, M. le Maître, remembered the words of one of these persons, referring to the sisters at a later date (1651), when age had yet more strongly marked their respective characters. Mme d'Aumont, one of several secular persons of rank who retired in age and widowhood to Port Royal to devote the remainder of their lives to good works and piety, said to him :—

'I assure you, Monsieur, the Mother Agnès suits me better (*Je m'accommode mieux de la Mère Agnès*); our Mother (Angélique) is too strong for me. What she says sometimes in the ardour of the Spirit of God that animates her, so frightens and amazes me that I am quite cast down at it. Only a week ago Mme de Belize, daughter of M. Angran, *Receveur des Consignations*, and widow of a Counsellor of the Grand Council, brought her grandchild to Port Royal and her great-niece, child of M. Bertaut, her brother-in-law, and the two children were allowed

¹ *Abrégé de la Vie de la Mère Agnès*, loc. cit., vol. iii, p. 207.

to come in. The Mother, seeing the little Bertaut, who is six years old, very fine and all crimped and curled, spoke to her so strongly about the way in which her parents adorned her like a little heathen, teaching her, instead of Christian modesty, the vanity of the world, and contributing to make her lose the grace of her innocence and of her baptism; that this little girl, who is intelligent, was so frightened that she did nothing but cry all the time she was in the Convent.¹

The case seems certainly one of those in which it had been better to wait for the movement of grace—in the parents.

The Mother Agnès on the other hand failed, where she failed, through lack of this uncompromising zeal for others and of faith in their power of attaining the high standard she herself strove after,—lack, one should say rather, writing of Port Royal, of faith in the power of God's grace. She failed, in her extreme old age, to give the strong support required by a young niece, tempted to compromise (in that matter of the *formula* which is the last chapter in the history of Port Royal), and falling for want of it, so both she and the aged Mother believed afterwards, into grave sin and into a most grievous repentance.²

The fervour of the Mother Agnès found its vent in an extreme attachment to the services of the Church and to prayer. When deprived in her younger days, for reasons of penance or health, of any of these indulgences, instead of yielding the glad obedience which, in the eyes of Port Royal, was the supreme conventual virtue, she could not be restrained from much weeping. And her disposition remained the same in old age.

This love of prayer and church-ceremonies had existed in her unregenerate days, from childhood even, and was in part a mere outcome of nature. It had co-existed, on her first coming to Port Royal, with that love of her dignity as Abbess of S. Cyr alluded to by Angélique in her narrative, and with great self-esteem and vanity. But in this respect she was wholly changed. When, at the age of fifteen, brought over as we saw at Angélique's instance from S. Cyr to Port Royal,

¹ *Entretiens . . . avec M. le Maître*, Mémoires pour servir . . . , vol. ii, pp. 329–30.

² v. *post*, p. 389.



CHCEUR DE PORT ROYAL DES CHAMPS.



REFECTOIRE DE PORT-ROYAL DES CHAMPS.

THE CHOIR AND THE REFECTORY AT PORT ROYAL DES CHAMPS

From engravings by Madeleine Hortemels

she first expressed a wish for the habit, Angélique, then seventeen :—

‘saw well that it was not yet time. I made her,’ she recounts to her nephew, ‘postpone it more than six months. There was in her only nature pure and simple, without any apparent infusion of the grace of God. She loved austerity by nature, and fasted strictly. She was good and punctual but vain and ambitious (*glorieuse*) beyond what one could conceive, to the point of asking God why He had not caused her to be born Madame de France, who was afterwards Queen of Spain. She had a self-esteem which was opposed to all humiliation and penance, and which was insupportable to me because God had already converted me. I said to her once, when she asked for the habit : *My Sister, you are not yet fit for it, for if you were to come late to the choir or to the refectory and I ordered you some penance, you would not be able to endure it.* She replied coldly and proudly : *There remains only not to come too late to the choir or refectory.* She was very particular as to her food, nature not leading her to be austere in that respect. She was dainty, neat and particular in her clothes, to an excess. But God changed her wholly some months after : He took entirely away from her this daintiness and this vanity. When she had taken the vows, I made her sacristan ; and one day, as she was carrying a jar full of oil for the lamp, she let it break against a stone, and her dress was all covered with oil. As I knew she was very clean by nature, I forbade her to change her dress or to have the oil removed, and ordered her to wear it day and night until I should tell her not to do so any longer. She wore it by my order six whole weeks. I mortified her terribly ; but the Holy Spirit who was in her enabled her to endure all. She was too much attached to the choir : I had her removed from it one day to mortify her. She was then Novice, it is forty years ago and more ; and she cried terribly over it. And I said to her recently : See there, my Mother, our old and our first dispositions endure long. Do you remember that I had you removed from the choir all weeping, more than forty years ago, because you loved nothing but the service ? I see well that if I were to forbid you now to take part in it on some occasion, you would weep now as then : truly, we never cure ourselves of our old maladies.’¹

Together with this passion for the external ceremonies of the Church, Agnès had a tendency to absorption, of a decidedly

¹ *Entretiens . . . avec M. le Maître*, loc. cit., vol. ii, p. 265 seq.

mystical character, in private prayer. Angélique experienced a 'silence of the heart before God', the awe and stillness that is consciousness of His presence; Agnès was more directly aware of the voice of God speaking in her. The thoughts that came to her at such times seemed to her not her own. 'She had experienced,' her brother, the theologian Antoine, said, pronouncing her funeral speech, 'internal communications, and whatever reserve she had exercised that it might not be perceived, there had escaped her things which had sufficiently shown that her thoughts were those of a soul which, having come out of itself, was floating in the abyss of the divinity.'¹

At the suggestion of her confessor she set down once in writing these inspired thoughts, making a little book of devotion which, falling under hostile eyes, raised a stir warranted neither by its merits nor demerits, and brought upon the nuns their first taste of persecution. To this affair of the *Chapelet Secret* our narrative will bring us again. But, in general, her humility saved her from attaching undue importance to these thoughts 'not her own'; above all she avoided speaking of them to the nuns, seeing in them a grace vouchsafed to her that called only for richer fruits of service and stricter reform of character. And if she prayed more than the others, she had also, the niece testified, a greater ardour for work. Conversely, Angélique's intense faith in God's rule brought her vehemence into harness, to wait upon the signs of His grace. Angélique was of active and practical, rather than contemplative nature, and her virile intellect was more constantly dominant. Inspiration did not come to her in the shape of thoughts foreign to her natural reason, but sometimes in the force of utterance with which she impressed her habitual and reasoned thoughts upon others. The miraculous answers she received sometimes to prayer were in the way of special manifestations of external providence: opportune gifts of money and the like, at times of great need.

Again, while the sterner temperament of the elder sister,

¹ *Relation abrégée de la mort de la Mère Agnès, et de ce que M. Arnauld dit à son sujet le lendemain de son enterrement*, Mémoires pour servir . . ., vol. iii, pp. 261-2.

impressed with the thought of Eternity and the nothingness of this life, dwelt upon the severer aspects of Christian doctrine, so that she felt at times her devotion to be motivated by dread rather than love, and herself once stigmatizes her zeal as servile,¹ the younger let these dread thoughts of judgement and damnation pass lightly over her. Her tranquillity had a surface of bubbling playfulness; her letters—even those ‘thoughts not her own’—break out into spiritual conceits and fine-drawn allegory. There would seem to have been a sportive element in the very exercise of mortification and penance under her rule; a merry ingenuity in catching out the wiles of self-love and perfecting conventual virtue.

In aim and in ideal of the religious life, there was no divergence between the two sisters; the band of nuns trained under Angélique at Maubuisson united as one body with the community of which Agnès had for several years held the reins:—

‘This great number of Sisters’—this influx from Maubuisson—‘which suddenly increased the community of Port Royal,’ writes the niece,² ‘only kindled a still greater fervour: as, when one throws a great quantity of wood upon a big fire, it flames up again. This new Novitiate relaxed in nothing at Port Royal. On the contrary all the persons whose charity and knowledge could bring souls to greater perfection were reunited by the return of the Mother Angélique, of Sister Isabelle-Agnès, and of Sister Marie-Claire, who, with the Mother Agnès, formed as it were a conspiracy of zeal to carry yet further the fervour of their charity. The three latter assembled often to deliberate together as to the means that could contribute to perfect this work of God, which was the sole object of their care; and when they had thought of something that might be useful, they went to propose it to the Mother Angélique, who sanctioned it by her authority or modified it by her prudence.

‘They thought it desirable to cut off entirely the Conferences which had been held thitherto, but which are not in the Rule of S. Benedict. The Capuchins, who had helped the Mother Angélique at the beginning of the Reform, had had them instituted; and the practice of all the new Orders caused them to be thought necessary. But the love of silence and

¹ *Lettres de la Mère Angélique*, vol. i, p. 119.

² *Relation . . . par la Mère Angélique de S. Jean . . .*, Mémoires pour servir . . ., vol. i, p. 204 seq.

the spirit of prayer which reigned then at Port Royal made them superfluous for persons whose continual conversation was in heaven. Thus they had no difficulty in giving up these external discourses, which are often a greater burden to piety than a solace to nature. Accordingly, no more Conferences were held until the establishment of the Monastery of Paris, when the Direction changed; and the persons who then governed not only restored the Conferences, but instituted also recreations twice a day with all the liberty practised at the Carmelites, whom M. de Langres, who managed everything then at Port Royal, wished to be taken as model.' (This was later, when Angélique obtained her heart's desire, relinquished her charge, and, with the sweets of obedience, tasted also some of the bitterness.¹)

'Among other examples of Silence, of which a special study was made at Port Royal in these early times, one may be indicated in the person of Sister Isabelle-Agnès *de Châteauneuf*, who spent an entire Lent engaged in the kitchen (where all the Choir Sisters served turn by turn), without ever, during these six weeks, speaking a single word, whether superfluous or necessary, because the practice of making herself understood by signs sufficed when there was need to ask for anything. She was capable of forming others in the exercise of this virtue, by giving them such a model. In truth the young Nuns of whom she had care' (Angélique had made her, it will be remembered, Mistress of Novices), were so exact in their practice of silence and of mortification, that, as it chanced one day a Novice, called Sister Isabelle-Christine *de Rosières*, was sent in the evening to a cell thought to be furnished, but in which there proved to be only fagots that had been stacked there. She slept on the top of these and covered herself with her church-cloak, and dwelt there several days without its occurring to her that she should speak of it; and it was only by chance that some Sister, having gone to the cell where she had been told she slept, and finding nothing but fagots, believed she had made a mistake and went to say so. But when the girl was thereupon called to say where she slept, she was obliged to explain how it was.

'This example might seem extraordinary nowadays,' (Angélique the niece, who records, already sees or imagines degeneracy in the Convent) 'but then was not so at all, although this manner of occasion did not occur often. But the spirit of these holy Nuns was always ready to embrace such occasions as a favour from God, when they presented themselves. The more ordinary practice of the Mothers who directed them was not to

¹ v. *post*, ch. ix.

instruct them in the general obligation of Religious, to bear all the crosses which God should send them gladly ; they had already so strongly impressed it upon them that they found no sweetness save in the bitterness of penance. But desiring that this fire should kindle in them more and more, they (the Mothers) sought, with care, devices to humiliate them and to mortify them in things for which they were not prepared, for fear lest familiarity should lessen the merit of their ordinary mortifications, and that their fervour should slacken for want of exercise. The Mother Agnès excelled in finding methods of rooting out all that might yet live of secret self-love and of human complacency in these souls, for whom she was jealous with a jealousy all of God, and whom she would fain offer all pure to Jesus Christ. She did it with the greater facility since she had herself no greater pleasure, or more ordinary exercise, than that of a constant mortification, and gave to these Sisters only the remains of this spiritual table where she fed with Jesus Christ upon the joys (*les voluptés*) of penance, when she sought new means to make them die to themselves.'

This period of happy rivalry in humility and labour lasted some three years. But the peace was not, even at this time, wholly unrelieved. One unhappy event is recorded, one of the Mother Angélique's rare failures. An ill-humoured lay-sister, taking offence at her treatment, positively ran away from the convent in the secular garments of one of the novices, climbing the walls at night and carrying off with her the relics from a cross on the church altar. This poor woman had been for seven or eight years engaged as lay-sister in the kitchen, and in spite, the narrative says, of continual toothache, had acquitted her duties well. 'But, as she was very small-minded, she did not persevere in submission.' The Mother Angélique removed her from the kitchen—purely, it seems, for her health's sake. The removal was taken as an affront ; the unhappy Sister Marguerite-Agathe Du Chesne, as she was called, fell into murmurings and neglect of her duties, proved unamenable to all Angélique's efforts, and finally, offended by refusal of leave to communicate in this frame of mind at the Feast of All Saints, she fled as related.¹

¹ *Relation de la . . . Sœur Anne de S. Augustin Garnier touchant la charité de la Mère Angélique au sujet d'une Sœur Converse nommée Sœur Marguerite-Agathe Du Chesne, Mémoires pour servir . . .*, vol. ii, p. 439 seq.

After undergoing terrors from wolves in the dark night and finding temporary shelter in a poor woman's cottage, she reached Paris, and sought out a sister she had there in service, who, horrorstruck, took her to the Bernardines to confess; whence word was sent to Port Royal.

The community there meanwhile had become aware of the flight. 'The Mother Angélique caused the Host to be exposed; the whole community did penance with unspeakable fervour and dismay.' When at length the culprit was brought back, 'as she approached the door, the Mother Angélique extinguished the lights, and, opening to her, she threw herself upon her neck and embraced her, saying: "Oh, my dear child!" She led her herself to reclothe her with her Nun's dress.' Unhappily neither kindness nor the penance imposed availed to convert this nun. She attempted again, though this time unsuccessfully, to escape; and finally was transferred to another convent,—'where she died,' is the sad brief ending of the tale.

This seems to have been the one exception to the general fervour. And, richly compensating for the loss of one ungracious nun, another of the Arnauld sisters, the youngest, Madeleine, was gathered to the fold; while, crown of all, the widowed mother, Madame Arnauld herself, resolved to embrace the religious life, becoming spiritual daughter to her own child, Angélique.

As Angélique had journeyed to Maubuisson, on accepting the charge of temporary Abbess (1618), she had spent, as her narrative tells us, some days at her father's house. There she had seen her little ten-year-old sister (twenty, be it remembered, was the tale of the Arnauld family, of whom ten survived, and close on twenty years separated these two daughters) 'quite worldly and playing the beauty (*qui faisait la belle*), which indeed she was'. Angélique describes the interview to her nephew:—

'As soon as I saw her it distressed me, and I said to her: *What, my little sister Madeleine, would you not like to be a Nun and come and live with us?* To the which she answered boldly: "No, my sister, I don't want to in the very least." *Ah! and what then do you wish to be, my child?* Sister, I want to be married. To which I replied: *And what makes you desire*

marriage? 'Nothing at all, she told me, but the fondness I have for little children. I love them with all my heart. I am never tired of kissing and nursing my little nephews, and that is what makes me want to have some.' It is true that this simplicity of a little girl ten years old who did not know the meaning of virginity or of marriage, and whose only desire was to be the mother of little children, made me laugh a little at first; but afterwards I felt sad at seeing her so worldly and so remote from giving herself to God.'

The beautiful child was in fact reserved, in her father's intention, for matrimony and establishment in the world. But the force which M. Arnauld had set in movement when he had pledged the unwilling Angélique to convent vows, was now beyond his guidance and overbore his present wishes. The monastic life, embraced, after conflict, with full strength of will, had become in Angélique's eyes the supreme good to be desired for all she loved. Her influence—she had made no doubt a deeper impression than she knew upon the 'worldly' little sister—was decisive, and the issue waited, not on the father's plans, but on her prayers. This is the sequel to her home visit :—

'I left then with my Sisters' (the young nuns Marie-Claire and Isabelle-Agnès) 'for Maubuisson; and my mother, who escorted me, brought with her a girl who waited upon my little sister, and who wished to be a Nun. As this girl only told me her intention after I had reached Maubuisson, I told her I could not receive her then and there, because all the vacant places were engaged by other girls, but that I advised her to wait and in the meanwhile to speak about God to my little sister Madelon, and to pray well for her, that He might give her the grace of converting her; and if God made use of her for this event, which I greatly desired, I would promise to receive her, not at Maubuisson where the places were taken, but at Port Royal which was all reformed, and where she would do much better to settle than in the Abbey of Maubuisson.

'This girl, well pleased with the proposition I made her, told me that she would pray God for my little sister as much as she possibly could; and God so answered the prayer which she said with such fervour, and the desire I had to see her all His, that, the very night following upon this conversation, my little sister Madelon, who was sleeping in my mother's room (and had next to her Catherine, a cousin, since Mme Baraudin, who is with Mlle de Longueville), saw in

a dream a tall and very beautiful woman, who said she was S. Magdalene, her patron saint, who was in a desert and who called her, saying : *Come, my daughter, come to the desert with me.* And then she was seized with such a desire to be a Nun, that on the spot she called her great friend Catherine and woke her, to tell her she had just formed the plan of leaving the world and of going to pass her life in the desert of Port Royal, and that she had seen S. Magdalene who had called her. This girl, who was sensible, answered her that she must wait till the morning when she got up to tell her dream and must go to sleep for the rest of the night, inwardly mocking at what she had said. The little girl said to her : *You do not believe me, but it will take place.* And in the morning she recounted this dream to my father, who joked about it, and afterwards to my sister Catherine de S. Jean, your mother' (Angélique is addressing herself always to the nephew, M. le Maître), 'who put no more faith in it.

'However, on my mother's return from Maubuisson, my sister Catherine went to meet her as she entered the house, and said to her that she had a piece of very fresh news for her, namely, that her sister Madelon declared since last night only that she would be a Nun, and asserted so much that she would be that she could not be doubted. My mother put more faith in this speech than my sister ; and, after having seen the little girl assert and reassert it continually, she saw her afterwards punctually carry out what she had seen in a dream, and obtain further by the fervour of her prayers the vocation of her cousin Anne (de S. Paul) Arnauld whom she loved as herself, and whom she had then and there promised to pray for always until she should come and be Nun at Port Royal, as you have seen she has since done.' ¹

Angélique, though critical on the subject of visions, was in nowise incredulous. This is one of three, seen by her sisters, the child Madelon, Anne-Eugénie, and Mme le Maître respectively, which she held genuine, concluding from them that 'while there are an infinitude of false visions, and this path is often dangerous, there yet may be true ones.' ²

S. François de Sales, who made acquaintance with the whole Arnauld family after Angélique, saw the little Madelon—the child insisted on kissing him, a thing which, although he

¹ *Entretiens . . . avec M. le Maître, Mémoires pour servir . . .*, vol. ii, p. 339 seq.

² *Ib.*, p. 337.

never permitted it, he could not refuse to her childish simplicity—and gave a certain credence to her assertions. ‘This little one may very well become a Nun,’ he observed, ‘I fear only that her mirror may prevent her.’ ‘But her mirror,’ adds Angélique, ‘by the grace of God, did not prevent her; she never knew that she was beautiful, for God so early prepossessed her with the sense He gave her of the beauty of the soul and of Paradise that she never considered that of her face.’¹

At the age of fifteen,—at the time, namely, of Angélique’s return from Maubuisson—, this child took the habit at Port Royal, and two years later the vows. The young nun, or novice, however free from personal vanity, tried the Mother’s patience in other respects. For she began :—

‘to relax and to fall into the habit of no longer obeying with simplicity, but of contradicting and arguing about all that was said to her, a thing which the Mother suffered for a time. She then saw that her patience did not produce the good effect that she wished, and that from day to day she (Madeleine) acquired an air of self-sufficiency and conceit (*élévation*), which had need of being repressed. Her zeal kindled, and she thought it necessary to chase out a demon of pride by confusion. Accordingly she gave a serious rebuke to her little sister and accompanied it by two blows. But as it was charity that struck her, it was charity also that on the instant cured her; and from that moment, and even as if the Devil had been seen to fly, in the way reported in the *Life of S. Benedict* on a similar occasion, so great a change was it which appeared in this sister that she preserved ever since, and up to her death, a character of simplicity, of humility and of submission, which made her notable and which seemed a special gift of God.’²

Angélique herself records, talking to the nephew, that she had frequently occasion to chastise this young sister, but that her words and tears so convinced the culprit that it was unwillingly and for her own good that, when asked afterwards if she still loved her, she replied, ‘Alas! my Mother, I love you the more for it.’³ (Of Madelon little more is recorded,

¹ *Ib.*, p. 302.

² *Relation . . . de la Mère Angélique de S. Jean*, Mémoires pour servir . . . , vol. i, pp. 188–9.

³ *Entretiens . . . avec M. le Maître*, loc. cit., vol. ii, p. 252.

save the lot, too sadly frequent among these nuns, of recurrent illness and many infirmities, accepted and welcomed as a favour of God; with this, her love of poverty and so forth. She died after twenty-four years of life as a nun, aged not quite forty.)

Yet one more sister remained entangled, though against her will, in the world. The eldest of all, Catherine, Madame le Maître, unhappily married, cherished the wish to enter a convent, but could neither take the vows while her husband lived nor quit Paris, to dwell as she would gladly have done at Port Royal, because of the care of her children.

Madame Arnauld, on the other hand, was left now a widow; and only this married daughter, with her cares, was a check on the desire, which she too presently conceived, of following in her children's wake and taking vows. M. Arnauld had died while Angélique was at Maubuisson, likewise turning to piety, of a genuine and very practical kind, in his illness; vowing, if he recovered, to live in strict poverty, and exercise his legal profession only in the service of the poor and oppressed. His widow, always of strict virtue and active benevolence, though with an eye to the honour of the world, as Angélique says of her, even more than to that of God, had been for some time quickened to more active spirituality, and had made a general confession. Her interest in Port Royal was continuous, and her benevolent support to be counted on, as was seen in the case of the band of young nuns for whom she supplied means of conveyance to Port Royal from Maubuisson; although there indeed Angélique had employed a species of ruse, bidding the girls throw themselves at the feet of Madame Arnauld to ask her intercession, which so touched the good woman that she came to her daughter with tears in her eyes saying they moved her pity and must certainly be received. Madame Arnauld it was who was the moving agent in the translation presently effected of the convent to Paris, a step occasioned chiefly by the vast amount of illness in the country, attributed to the malarial site, but also by her desire to have the convent in close neighbourhood with that other interest, her eldest daughter and grandchildren. Madame Arnauld, on taking the vows, did away with the special pecuniary difficulty

of such a move, by buying a house in the Faubourg S. Jacques that could serve the required purpose.¹

Angélique's narrative gives the course of these events, from her return from Maubuisson to the removal to Paris.

Narrative of the Mère Angélique (continued)

'Directly after my arrival, I was besought urgently by five Nuns of the Paraclete, of our Order (Diocese of Amiens), to receive them in company with one whom I had already received. I did it gladly and with the full accord of our Sisters, who have had always so perfect a docility that they have never opposed me; on the contrary, all that I held good was taken as such. I received yet three more from S. Antoine des Champs. In fine, our number increased up to eighty, among whom there were always a number of invalids, without that afflicting those who were Professed Nuns of the House, or those whom God had called thither. We lived in this manner three years, lacking for nothing, and living eighty with more ease, though without increase of revenue, than we had lived when we were only thirteen or fourteen, and I think I ought to show this to the glory of the Divine Providence by an instance. Having received two thousand *livres* in dower from a Sister who took the vows at this time, we lent them to an honest man who did us sundry services in Paris, to buy a house belonging to a Chapter, which he obtained very cheap on account of the affection the Canons bore him; and this favour we did him enabled him to provide for all his children, the house being of four times the value. And little by little he returned us the money, without its inconveniencing him.

'God, Who of His goodness had increased this large number to save them, diminished it presently to take fifteen to heaven, who died within two years and all very happily, as may be seen in the Mortuary Register,² where a few words have been written about several of them.

'My mother had in mind always our settlement in Paris; but no progress was made towards it. There was sent us at that time a girl of good birth who had money, and who it was

¹ For Madame Arnauld, v. *Relation de la Vie et des vertus de Madame Arnauld, Religieuse de Port-Royal sous le nom de Sœur Catherine de Sainte-Félicité. Par Madame le Maistre, sa fille aînée, Mémoires pour servir . . .*, vol. iii, p. 275 seq.

² The '*Nécrologe*' of Port-Royal assumed in time large proportions and was published, together with a '*Supplément*', early in the eighteenth century.

thought would assist ; but after she had been here some time and had even taken the Habit, we found her unsuitable and discharged her. My mother came to see us very often, and dwelt with us as much as her occupations would permit, having permission from the Superiors ; and, as my sister Le Maître was taken very ill in our House, she made a very long stay.

‘It happened that a Nun took the Vows, and at the sermon preached on the occasion my mother was so touched by God that, after the ceremony, she came to beg me to put her in retreat. This gave me great joy, for I strongly suspected that this retreat of a few days would culminate in that of all her life. I granted it to her at once, and she had the goodness and humility to desire Direction from none but me ; and the very next day, to my surprise, she asked my pardon on her knees, with tears in her eyes, because she had been angry with me for receiving Nuns for nothing. It was not those from Maubuisson to whom she alluded ; for, as for them, she had begged me with all her heart to do so, these poor girls having touched her with pity ; but there were others whom she did not think in so great need, or whose relatives had money and would not give as much as she thought they should, since the House was so poor. God in His goodness made her see this fault, and from that time it was impossible to take enough to please her.

‘Two days after, she told me that God had called her to be Nun, but that she was very uneasy on account of my sister Le Maître, whose husband was still living, and who could not leave Paris on account of her children. My sister Le Maître, who had long had an intense desire to be a Nun (or at least, since that could not be while her husband lived, to dwell with us), was so delighted that she rose from her bed to go in search of my mother and tell her that she entreated her very humbly not to let consideration of her hinder her from following the vocation of God, and that she advised her to buy us a House in Paris ; which was incontinently resolved. They returned to Paris to obtain the permission of the Archbishop, and to look for a House. This lasted nearly a year ; for M. the Archbishop raised difficulties, and also because no House was to be found.’

CHAPTER VII

Reform in other Convents aided by the Mère Angélique.—Narrative of the Nun who accompanied her.

PENDING the removal, Angélique had other occupation for her energies than the task, so well fulfilled by Agnès, her Coadjutrix, of setting a finer edge upon the conventual virtue now well established at Port Royal. Reform there was a seed which spread to other convents, more propitious in their soil than Maubuisson, and Angélique, appealed to for advice and help, had again a change of field for the exercise of her strong influence, and a varied practice for her tact and charity. The nunnery of Lys in particular asked and received help at this time. The Sisters Anne Eugénie (Arnauld) and the young Marie des Anges were sent first to act as Prioress and Mistress of Novices there,¹ and Angélique set the seal upon their work by her own stay, prolonged by illness, in that convent, just before she left for Paris. A nun who attended her has given reminiscences of the sojourn at Lys and of another visit to Poissy, as also of the first years in Paris.

At Lys as at Maubuisson the Abbess had been deposed for ill conduct. She was, however, when first the nuns from Port Royal went to help in reform, still in possession, and Mme de la Tremouille, who was to succeed, and who had sought their assistance, had further a rival claimant, the Abbess having promised to resign in favour first of the one and then of the other. This rival was expelled by the agency of friends of Mme de la Tremouille, a high-handed proceeding naturally disapproved of by Angélique. Not until that rival had been suitably provided for elsewhere, would she lend the

¹ v. *Relation de la manière dont quelques Religieuses du Port-Royal commencèrent à établir la réforme dans l'Abbaye du Lys. Par la Sœur Anne-Eugénie de l'Incarnation Arnauld, qui y fut quelques années Prieure, Mémoires pour servir . . .*, vol. i, p. 381 seq.

weight of her authority to Mme de la Tremouille, but afterwards she helped to establish her in charge and to fortify her, when duly appointed, in exercise of her functions, disputed still by the original Abbess.

‘Mme de la Tremouille, who was nominally Coadjutrix’ (we cite now the companion nun’s narrative)¹ ‘bore her a peculiar and tender affection. The Mother Angélique availed herself of this affection to speak to her strongly, to the effect that she could not in conscience direct the Abbey, since she had been placed in possession, not by legitimate means, but by force of arms. She spoke to her often on this topic with great zeal, telling her that all that time she had not been in a right state, that she ought to have great scruples about it: which she said to her with so much kindness and charity that ever, at the conclusion of the discourse, Mme de la Tremouille would come and embrace her and remain clinging a long while to her neck. Whereupon our Mother said to her with unparalleled gentleness: “Well! Is not all I have said quite true? One must ask God’s forgiveness. It is a pitiable thing to wish to be Abbess, or, though one may not wish it oneself, to yield through weakness (*mollesse*), for lack of a generous courage, to the will of one’s relatives . . .”

‘A month or six weeks later the Superiors of the Order and the Apostolic Protonotary put her in possession. Then the Mother Angélique insisted as strongly on making her exercise her charge as she had made her scrupulous at having entered upon it contrary to the order prescribed by the canons.

‘The old Abbess who had been deposed, but who was still in the House, greatly tormented Mme de la Tremouille, and would not cede any of the Abbatial functions; so that, when the bell rang for Service, she hastened to occupy the Chair, to give the signs, sing the benedictions, &c. Which made great trouble in the Monastery. The young Abbess, for the sake of peace, wished not to attend the Service, because when, for example, at Vespers she began to sing the Pater, the old Abbess repeated it from her side with a still louder voice, and that gave rise to a great dissension. After that, Mme de la Tremouille would come and throw herself at the feet of the Mother Angélique, all in tears, telling her positively she would go no more to the Service, &c. But our Mother was firm, and

¹ *Relation de la Sœur Angélique de Sainte-Agnès de Marle de la Falaire: où elle rapporte tout ce qu’elle a remarqué dans les voyages qu’elle a faits avec la Mère Angélique, au Lys, à Poissi, et à Paris, lorsqu’elle vint s’y établir, Mémoires pour servir . . .*, vol. i, pp. 395 seq.

told her she ought to go, that it was a penance sent her by God for having exercised the office of Coadjutrix when she should not; that, when the old Abbess went to Church to the higher seats, she must go to the lower with her Nuns, because otherwise this old Abbess would think she had ousted her and would take advantage of it; that the intention of the Superiors who had put her in possession was for her to exercise her charge; that she must be strong and courageous (*généreuse*); that God would aid her, since she did it, not from a violent and imperious authority and love of dominion, but by submission and dependence upon her Superiors.

‘As Mme de la Tremouille was almost always with the Mother Angélique, when the bell rung for Service, the latter took wonderful heed to tell her that it was of importance to go, and she added always some little word of comfort to fortify her. At length the Mother Angélique succeeded in making her overcome the violence of the old Abbess, by taking the upper hand with her in a humble and courteous manner, and yielding to her in all that could be done without prejudice to her charge. This was so well done that the enmity of the old Abbess for Mme de la Tremouille lessened and they became afterwards good friends; and one may say that it was due to the heed given by the Mother Angélique, and to the prayers she made to God for that end.

‘She said to me often (for I was alone in her room, with the one who served her): “*Let us pray to God for Madame,*” and to her she used to say: “*You will have only as much strength as you have diligence to look to God.*” When Madame was obliged to go somewhere very repugnant to her on account of the old Abbess, she begged her to kneel, and knelt with her, to offer herself to God and ask His aid. She spoke to her often about the necessity of turning to God on every occasion to receive His help, and be directed by His Spirit; and she told her that, without this dependence upon God and this guidance of His Spirit, one does nothing of any worth, because one acts of oneself, and that ruins and spoils all. She added many beautiful things which those acquainted with her manner of speaking will relate better than I.

‘She discoursed often with Mme de la Tremouille about the duties regarding her post, with great insight and knowledge of the obligations of a Superior.

‘What is yet more notable is the behaviour of the Mother Angélique towards the old Abbess. She showed her a respect that I often wondered at, and paid her very special attentions. During the three or four months we were at Lys, I do not believe a single day passed without her telling me to go and

see her on her behalf, because it was not thought fitting that she should go herself. Since I suffered through vain fear, because her Abbatial dwelling was almost entirely distinct from the Monastery and I was afraid that, when there, she would do something to me, I sometimes testified to the Mother Angélique unwillingness to go. Whereupon she said to me that it was necessary to fortify myself against it; that I knew what the Scriptures said, that we should heap coals of fire upon the head of our neighbour, to try and win him. And when I replied, à propos of the discourse she (the old Abbess) addressed me when I went to see her, that it was waste of time and that she was as it were confirmed in her sin, the Mother answered me that one must not say that, and must hope to the end; that, since she was in the House, she was obliged to pay her due respects even though she received them very badly.

Although I often tempted the Mother Angélique to leave this former Abbess alone, reporting that she said to me she found more sense and more society in little birds than in people—which I told because I was vexed at the way she spoke to me; our Mother replied: “*No matter; one must see her, God wills it and charity demands it.*” Thus I was obliged to pay this visit every day without fail; and she told me plainly that she would not send me if there were any risk for my person, but that she (the old Abbess) was seen to have a slight inclination for me: which shows that the Mother did nothing save by Direction.

She displayed extreme zeal on an occasion that I will tell. It was that the former Abbess committed the greatest outrages when they came to depose her and to put Mme de Tremouille in possession; and, after all she had done and said, she came and presented herself at the Communion. The Mother Angélique knew it, and had so great an abhorrence of the act that she was quite overwhelmed; and she opposed it, declaring it must on no account be permitted, and spoke to the Confessor in such a manner that when she (the old Abbess) came to communicate he passed her by and said positively he would not give her the Communion, and that before all the Church because her crimes had been public.

The Mother Angélique further commanded esteem all the time she was at Lys by the care and heed she took to give no trouble. During this time she was very ill, and she suffered many incommunities about which she would not even allow us to speak a word. We had been lodged in a very small room, very inconvenient; and we wanted to mention it to Madame, but she forbade us. We did so nevertheless some

time after, and Madame wanted to move her ; but she would not even permit it, and said she had not come into the House to give trouble ; and she took pleasure in finding herself lodged so meanly and uncomfortably.

‘ While she was ill, many of the Sisters of Port Royal wrote to her with feelings of singular sorrow, about her departure from Port Royal and her illness. Since she could not reply, she made me write for her, and I remember she said to them that to give way like that to sorrow was a sign that we had no faith ; that one should attach oneself to God alone, and possess the peace spoken of by S. Paul, which exceedeth all understanding ; that the love borne to a person must not be such as to be capable of causing us so much emotion, and make us lose the peace of the heart, more desirable than any other thing ; that one should constantly act and rise above oneself, &c. I remember among the rest that she sent injunctions of this sort to my Sister Marie Claire (Arnauld, her sister) ; and I observed that, although she loved her very warmly, she yet wrote to her with unexampled vigour, and condemned in her as well as in the others all these sensibilities and these fondnesses which, according to her, serve only to weaken us. She said to us sometimes : “ *Do you suppose, if I were to listen, I should not weep as well as you, when I think of the affliction of my sister the Coadjutrix and of the others I have left ; but one must be high-minded (généreuse) and consider eternity.* ” She said, that à propos of her illness, which caused very great sorrow. But God heard the prayers said for her and restored her to health.

‘ After three or four months she returned to Port Royal, where she remained, I think, only three or four days,—in which she gave evidence of her usual generous courage. For, with a multitude of Sisters weeping and sighing because she was going to Paris (for although they were assured that in time the whole Community would be reunited, this did not prevent tears and sorrow), the Mother withstood them with vigour, saying that, since the Superiors approved of the transference of the Monastery to Paris, it must be resolved upon. She went thither accordingly, and I had the good hap to accompany her.

‘ I have forgotten ’ (this Sister retraces her steps after a few pages on the arrival in Paris) ‘ to speak of the journey which the Mother Angélique took to Poissy at the prayer of Mme la Marquise de Maignelai. It was on her way from Port Royal to Paris ; she stayed there eight or ten days. The only thing I remarked was that, when Mme la Marquise expressed

to the Mother her great desire that she might contribute something to the reform of the Monastery of Poissy, where there was, it appears, some beginning, the Mother replied to her with great humility that one must look to God; that it was He who made conversions, that the creature could do nothing, and that she was very unworthy that God should make use of her; that she was a poor instrument for the works of God; that there was nothing nevertheless that she did not wish to do to help souls to be saved and to bring them to their duty. She said that and sundry other things by the way, and discreetly and prudently gathered information as to the Direction exercised in the Monastery, so that, entering with discernment into what was taking place, she might come with method into discourse with Mme de Poissy. On arriving, she found very little order.

‘True, Mme de Poissy had made some commencement of reform, and there were perhaps some ten or twelve Nuns on her side; but all the rest were strongly opposed to it and so leagued against her that it was pitiable. Besides that, it seemed that this Abbess did not set about it with sufficient gentleness. The Mother saw all that and spoke to Madame with great respect, taking her time to make her see matters, and when she saw them disposed—her and her sister, Mme de Dampierre—she spoke to them with so great zeal and so much affection that it was sometimes eleven at night before she went to bed. For she talked to them generally after supper, and however I might try, without failing in respect, to break off the discourse, it was not possible, and the Mother let herself be so carried away that she did not think of herself and her incommodities. When the discourse was over, then she felt it, and told us she was excessively weary; and nevertheless she did the same thing again on the morrow.

‘I have seen her sometimes, when she met some Nun whom she wished to try and win, stay talking to her for more than an hour without thinking whether she were weary or no. Since as a rule I accompanied her always (the Nuns were very willing, because they knew me and I had relatives among them), the Mother used to say everything in my presence; and I never observed that she spoke vainly or without fruit. She always made some effect upon their minds, little or much; and it seems to me I can still hear them as they answered: *It is true, Madame; it is true, Madame.* I have seen some of them weep for affection and feeling, and some change was seen afterwards in their lives, although in truth they perverted one another: I speak of those who were not in favour of Reform. For as for the others who were inclined to good,

they became strengthened when she had spoken to them, and so resolute and fervent, that it was a marvel. But all, the one set as well as the other, were never tired of saying to me: *What an admirable Abbess you have! What a mind! What power of persuasion!* For my part, said some of them, *while she is speaking I think nothing is so fitting as to do what she says.* There were two or three who went over to the side of reform while we were there, won by the power of the discourses of the Mother Angélique.

‘Our Mother caused some regularity to be introduced into their cloister. She tried also to make them change their head-dress, which was horrible; and Madame acceded to her reasons. For she received what the Mother said to her for the furtherance of Reform very kindly; and took so great pleasure in conversing with her, as did also Madame her sister, that it is not to be credited. When I said to Mme de Dampierre (the sister) with whom I was freer, that she kept our Mother too late, she replied that hours seemed to her a quarter of an hour, and, embracing me, she said: “How fortunate you are to have such a good Mother! She has every kind of capacity. She has good wit and great understanding of the things of God and of the world, and is besides exceedingly virtuous. I seem to be another person after I have spoken to her.” Mme de Poissy and all her Nuns allowed the Mother Angélique to depart with great sorrow and many tears.

‘There must not be forgotten the maxim of our Mother which she repeated several times to the Abbess of Poissy, namely, to commend greatly all her affairs to God, to consult His Spirit on all occasions, and not to depend upon her own industry and natural capacities, &c. Which she said much better than I can repeat.’

CHAPTER VIII

The Convent transferred to Paris.—Money difficulties.—Connexion with the Bishop of Langres.—The community quits the Cistercian Order.—*L'Institut du S. Sacrement.*

A HOUSE meanwhile had been found in Paris and, the necessary leave obtained from authorities, Angélique passed on thither with her attendant nuns to prepare for the transference of the community. The removal closes the first chapter, as we may call it, in the history of Port Royal, that convent idyl of happy rivalry in self-subdual, in works of charity and penance, without other interruption or care than the frequent illness which, in nuns' eyes, was itself but a variety of penance, the more treasured that it came direct from God.

But illness, in the now crowded convent, had become excessive, and, if the wishes of Madame Arnauld and, it may be, some desire to bring this admirable community to the fore, had their share in determining the advice given by the Directors, the argument of unhealthiness in the site was unanswerable by the Abbess. Lying in a valley at the foot of a slope, the undrained convent lands were damp and very malarious. Fevers decimated the nuns. The move was an external matter, moreover, in which Angélique might well practise obedience. Nevertheless, she blamed herself later and was blamed by the austere Saint-Cyran, in whom at length her spirit found its mate, for this step which she looked back upon as an act of distrust towards providence and a manner of desertion of her appointed post. It was a step unhappy at least in its first consequences, entangling the community in debt and temporal cares, subjecting it to the caprice of benefactors and to the ready calumny of jealous rivals.

Dissension, moreover, and divergence of aim, entered the convent. At first, to their straightened town quarters, the nuns transplanted their spirit of humble contented unity and

silent labour, and to the last there were nuns whose early training brought them through the troubled times—Angélique notes with humble admiration—without their ever perceiving discord to exist. But that first false step, if it were one, on Angélique's part, was accompanied by a second, unmistakable and more serious. Her keen discernment for once failed her and, betrayed by her monastic ideal of obedience, left by the death of François de Sales without a guide to whom she could unreservedly render submission, she placed herself and her convent in the hands now of a certain prelate, Zamet, Bishop of Langres, whom she took for a saint but who proved a weak relapsing mortal. This prelate's fervour at its height had the note of extravagance; as it cooled, the vein of ambition and love of notoriety showed plainly through. He was in the full glow of conversion from a careless life when Angélique first made his acquaintance, living with austerity in his diocese and striving to effect there a reform. His aims were sufficiently like her own to be expressed in like phraseology, identity of phrase covering, however, from the first fundamental difference of view, or else, as Angélique thought the case, the Bishop losing soon his first desires for simplicity and retreat. Under his influence and that of nuns introduced from his Diocese, Port Royal of Paris strayed sadly for a time from the spirit of simplicity, of glad obedience and silent industry, so well established at the convent *des Champs*.

To that spirit the convent returned. This Bishop was himself instrumental, by what Angélique saw as a wondrous guidance of providence, in bringing the nuns under the care of a new Director, the Abbé de Saint-Cyran, in whom Angélique found confirmation of her first thoughts of the religious life and of the teaching—she is careful under later criticism to insist on the likeness—of S. François de Sales. The Bishop, rousing by very human ambition very human jealousy (on the part notably of the Archbishop of Paris, who resented this intruder from Langres), was driven from the field and his nuns were sent back to his diocese. The convent was left free to recover painfully the path it had spontaneously followed in the country.

Meanwhile, however, Port Royal, with its offshoot in Paris,

the *Maison du S. Sacrement*, had come into great notoriety, notoriety in part cultivated by the said Bishop and aided by a 'miracle', which occurred in the early years, but especially fanned by a small 'persecution' and scandal, the affair of the *Chapelet Secret*. This was aimed at the Bishop of Langres and stirred by the jealousy of the rival Bishop of Sens; the innocent occasion, a small book of devotion composed, under 'inspiration', by our Mother Agnès, was too slight for grave consequences. But this affair brought the first breath, not easily cleared away, of ill fame to the nuns. Heresy and witchcraft (the devil had recently been very busy in convents and the scandals of Loudun were doubtless in men's minds) were rumoured of Port Royal or rather of its offshoot, the *Maison du S. Sacrement*. Saint-Cyran, appealed to, defended the *Chapelet*, winning thus the gratitude and trust of the Bishop of Langres. But, when presently the latter saw his own influence wane and that of Saint-Cyran established, he in his turn became 'persecutor', and, in loose calumniating talk and even in writing, lent his quatum to the disfavour and imprisonment of Saint-Cyran.

These troubled events are narrated by Angélique. She had been, during the ascendancy of the Bishop, silent spectator of changes she could not approve. She had vowed obedience to him, had, moreover, at an early stage and before her eyes were opened to the mischief, found the opportunity so long desired, for laying down her ill-gotten dignity, and had become simple nun in her own convent. Made Superior in the Bishop's new foundation, the *Maison du S. Sacrement*, she was still the obedient instrument, so far as she could be, of his wishes. True to her nun's ideal, she suppressed at the time, or strove to suppress, even internal criticism. But when later the Bishop turned to calumniate her new guide, her judgement was loosed in defence.

To her narrative, supplemented by side-lights from the nuns, we may now in the main leave the reader.

Narrative of the Mère Angélique (continued)

'At length, at the time God pleased, the House where the Paris Monastery now is, was found, after a hundred others

had been looked at. It was by far the most suitable that could ever be had for convenience and ease of communication with that *des Champs*.¹

‘I had permission to go and see it. The owner, an ancient ecclesiastical counsellor, received us with great warmth, and expressed great joy that his House should be converted into a Monastery. The bargain was struck, and straightway masons were set to work to add some small further structure, and to put things in order. That lasted up to the Day of the Holy Sacrament of the year 1625, when we arrived.’

That companion nun, the same who writes of Lys and Poissy, describes artlessly the three or four weeks of preparation, and the Mother’s tedium at the frequent visitors and disturbance :—

‘We were three weeks or a month without enclosure : which gave excessive trouble to the Mother Angélique because, in spite of the fact that we had had it, we were obliged to let in everybody. She contrived, however, that no men should enter, save certain Ecclesiastics ; for as to girls and women, there was no preventing it since, as is known, it was allowed everywhere. Mother Angélique strongly urged Madame Arnauld, her mother, to seek out Monseigneur of Paris and get him to send and establish enclosure. When evening came and visitors had gone, she used to say to us : “ Mon Dieu ! how tired I am of people ! Eh ! when shall we get our enclosure ! ” She begged us to let as few people as possible in ; and, when one went to tell her such and such a person was asking for her, she manifested such trouble and weariness as to excite pity. She excused herself whenever she could from appearing, but often she was constrained, because Madame Arnauld urged upon her reasons she found to the point.

‘During the three or four weeks of which I have spoken,

¹ This house was situated in the Faubourg S. Jacques—in the present Boulevard Port Royal, near the Gare Mont Parnasse—on the south fringe of Paris, and could be reached accordingly from Les Champs without any traversing of the town. The quarter was so thick with Convents as to be styled the Thébaidé of Paris, and there several new religious foundations, the Order of the Visitation among others, had their Houses. The Convent of Port Royal is now the great Maternity Hospital ; the Military Hospital in near vicinity was the Val de Grâce, while hard by again was the renowned and fashionable House of the Carmelites.

the Mother desired that we should not fail to repeat the Service, even though we were but two Nuns and some children whom she had brought from Port Royal and who assisted us. Although she herself was overwhelmed with visits, she did not fail to try and attend as constantly as she could, and she grieved when any irregularity occurred.

'She was in inexpressible joy when enclosure was established, and she said to us: *Mon Dieu, how happy we are! What a bustle! How could one withstand it!* She at once made the Nuns come from Port Royal. Enclosure was established on the 16th of June, and the Sisters from Port Royal arrived on the 18th of the same month.'¹

Narrative of the Mère Angélique (continued)

'At first,' continues Angélique, 'only fifteen of us came, for there was no room for more; and M. the Archbishop who had obliged us all to come' (refusing that is to sanction a double Community and two Convents) 'gave us the limit of a year to accommodate ourselves. It pleased God that, the same year we came to Paris, twelve of our Sisters died at the *Maison des Champs*, and a great number were very ill, so that, ascribing it to the bad air, we made as many as possible come. A gallery was made, which lodged a portion, all the garrets were wainscoted, and before the end of the year we were all lodged. There were fourteen in a garret, and we were everywhere very cramped. The choir was so small that it could not contain a fourth part of the Community. For all that, the Nuns were happy, as regular and as silent as though one had been in the most commodious Monastery in France.'

That companion nun, Sœur Angélique de Ste Agnès de Marle de la Falaire, notes again:—

'The Mother Angélique, having sent for a part of our Sisters of Port Royal, began to set all in order. She gave *obediences* to the Sisters, and exhorted us, both us and the others, to make a renewal, urging us to begin all afresh to serve and seek God. I have always observed that in every sort of event a little out of the common, our Mother would make it a ground and motive for taking up her obligations with more faithfulness and heed, and for making others take up theirs.

'She was alone, that is to say without the Mother Agnès,

¹ *Relation de la Sœur Angélique de Sainte-Agnès de Marle de la Falaire* . . . , Mémoires pour servir . . . , vol. i, pp. 401-2.

from the 18th of June up to Christmas. During this time she took great care of everything, and of all the Sisters in particular, applying herself to their needs with great warmth. She often took counsel with the rest of us, and with much humility obliged me to report to her such things as I noticed in general or in particular, to the end that she might bring all in good order.

'When she went to Port Royal (*des Champs*) to bring the rest of the Sisters who were still there, she did a thing which several noticed, and my sister Antoinette (de S. Augustin *Garnier*) mentioned it to me again recently: as for me I did not see it, not having been there. It is that, as she was having something made or taken to pieces by some poor workmen, she had a bag of money out of which she gave to them without reckoning; and, after she had given all away, there came another poor man who asked her for something. She told him she had no more and, taking off her shoes, she gave them him.'¹

Narrative of the Mère Angélique (continued)

'It was only I,' Angélique continues, 'and those who had charge of the housekeeping, who began to have anxiety, because it was necessary to borrow, though only a little, in order to make the structure required to lodge us all. But as the interest to be paid diminished our revenues, and as we spent more in Paris than in the country, living was more difficult; besides which, I was much distressed at owing money, a thing which all my life I had greatly dreaded. I had never borrowed, whatever our need, unless some small amount which I returned as quickly as I could. Nevertheless God gave us grace to refuse, in this need, three girls of good position, nieces of one of our best friends, for whom we should have received at least thirty-nine thousand *livres*, because I saw clearly that they wanted these girls to be Nuns, in order to make richer marriages for two of their sisters. They were already fourteen or fifteen years old, and had been brought up in a House but ill regulated. I said candidly to their aunt, that I feared God had not called these girls, and that I could not undertake them with the probability of returning them, which offended their mother. This is what caused this lady to break with us. I committed perhaps an indiscretion, for these girls turned out very well in a good House where they were placed. Nevertheless, I believe it was a working of the Divine Providence, because in all likelihood the relatives of these girls, who were of rank and some of them in high favour, would have wanted

¹ *Ib.*, pp. 406-7.

to take cognizance of our affairs and to intrigue, which would have injured us in all that it has pleased God to permit befall us since. We have had the good fortune that no relative of our Nuns has ever intervened in our affairs, which has been to us a special grace, and I believe that God caused one to die at the beginning of our troubles, because he might have brought us into great difficulty, notwithstanding that he was very friendly to us.

‘I had at that time nobody to whom I could speak about my conscience with entire confidence, because, as I have already said, God had removed them nearly all. It chanced that, on occasion of the Assembly of Clergy, I made acquaintance with a Bishop (M. Sébastien Zamet, Bishop of Langres), who had already been to see me at the Convent *des Champs*, because the Mère de Chantal had spoken to him of us, when she passed through his Diocese on her return to Savoy after the establishment in Paris’ (of Madame de Chantal’s Order of the Visitation). ‘What led her to speak of us was à propos of a Monastery of our Order, which he had reformed (the Abbey of Tard at Dijon). She recounted to him the reform of ours, where she had been, and of Maubuisson where I then was, which made the Prelate desire to see us ; and so, since he was at Paris for the Assembly, at the time we came to establish ourselves there, he came to see us and appeared to me a man all filled with zeal; with mortification and with true devoutness. And, because I then had nobody, I was glad to place confidence in him and to beg him to assist me with his saintly counsels. And truly those which he gave me at the beginning were very saintly, and served me greatly, above all in disengaging me from the obstinate desires (for so I may call them) which I had, to leave here and join the Visitation ; which caused strife in my mind, and made me more negligent of my obligations. My pretext was that, when I was seventeen, the age which, in order to obtain the Bulls, I had been said to be at Rome when I was only nine, my father sent there again to own the truth, asking pardon for the falsehood, and obtained new Bulls. At first there was some difficulty, because they wished to condemn him to restitution of the fruits. But my father gave information through the Official of Paris to prove that, so far from having enjoyed any, the House had been found so destitute that he had put his own money into it to restore it ; in consequence of which nothing had to be paid for the Bulls. The Holy Father declared my first Profession null, and obliged me to make a new one in six months if I desired to remain Nun and Abbess.

‘I was very glad of this nullity, which opened the door to

my leaving, which I so greatly desired in order to become Capuchin or Carmelite.' (Angélique had thought at one moment of joining the Carmelites in Flanders, who retained more of the simplicity of their foundress than the French Carmelites.) 'I did not mind where, so that it should be a well-ordered House; but I did not, however, dare to think of executing it, on account of my father, and I constantly deferred renewing my Profession. My father, who kept a constant watch as the six months drew to an end, begged M. de Clairvaux, who was in Paris, to come and make me make this Profession. I was taken very much by surprise. Nevertheless, I did not venture to refuse, and took my three Vows publicly; but with this express intention, that I pledged myself with all my heart to the three Vows, but not to the Rule of S. Benedict, nor to this House, where only present necessity forced me to observe stability for the time being.

'This Profession, so made, was to me always a pretext for trifling, and for seeking the means of leaving; and whatever might be said to me, and in spite of the tears of Mother Agnès, of my mother and of several of our Sisters who knew it, I could not or would not renounce this thought, seeing nothing in the world that could give me true repose save to be simple Nun in a place where I was not known.

'The Bishop, of whom I have spoken, to whom I told this thought, as one of the most important matters of my conscience, and the most precious to me, applied himself so strongly to make me give it up that I yielded, believing that God required it of me. He desired then that, communicating in our closed Chapel, I should repeat my Vows out loud; which I did, doing myself as great violence as if I had been getting made a Nun against my will. Nevertheless, I was at peace, and have had no trouble on that account since.

'Shortly afterwards it happened that a lady (Madame de Pontcarré), who was separated from her husband, had a great desire to come and dwell here, in order to withdraw from the world in which she was much entangled. She begged it of me through the medium of persons whom we greatly respected, which induced me very unfortunately to receive her, and without asking the advice of this Bishop, who had returned to his Diocese. Although I wrote to him always for everything, I did not tell him that which was the most important, and which proved, as I believe, by a punishment of God, a source of many evils, one of which was that the twenty-four thousand *livres* she brought us were the cause that the said Bishop desired us to undertake the building of our large dormitory. This sum scarcely sufficed for more than the

foundations, so that it became daily necessary to borrow, not only in order to finish the work, but also, as time went on, to pay the interest upon the loans, till it mounted up to a hundred and thirty-six thousand *livres*. For it was desired that nothing should be spared in this building, which burdened me with a very great trouble: at a loss every minute what to do in order to pay the interest and furnish money for the expenses which increased daily, all being dearer in Paris than in the country.'

The convent began to be dunned. Creditors, Angélique tells her nephew, would present themselves at the turnstile, and she, when she chanced to be there, fled and sent another, a certain Sœur Suzanne, in her place. 'This poor woman sustained all their complaints and satisfied them by her excuses and her gentleness, thus sparing me all these torments. I, meanwhile, flung myself on my knees before God, bursting into tears.'¹ The Bishop, who encouraged the outlay, would not himself lend money to the convent, deeming the security insufficient. They must look, he held, to that resource, in Angélique's eyes unlawful,—the dowries of new nuns.

Other matters, however, went forward more satisfactorily. Port Royal was released now from the jurisdiction of the monks of the Order, and placed, as Angélique wished, under the Ordinary, the direct control, that is, of the diocesan Bishop. A memoir which she wrote to justify this step narrates her experience, the opposition she had sustained from the monks in the matter of Reform, their incapacity as confessors, and their general mediocrity:—

'When Abbesses are haughty, the Confessors are their valets. This is so true that I have seen one of them engaged in planting out the Abbess' flower-beds, and setting in them her quarterings and initials; another I have seen carrying an Abbess' train, as lacqueys do for ladies of society. If Abbesses show humility and respect for the sacerdoce, as they should, they become masters and tyrants, to such an extent that, to credit them, one should not venture to do anything without their order, which frequently is disorder. Among other things they wish one always to go to law. . . . A Monk told me once that if one had not a good title, one should make one, and that he had made them and that it was easy. . . .'

¹ *Entretiens . . . avec M. le Maître, Mémoires pour servir . . .*, vol. ii, p. 320.

‘I do not speak here’—we cite her memoir—‘of what I have seen and known as to crimes committed by certain Monks in the Religious Houses of women where I have been; and of what Nuns senior to me have told me they had seen; or even of things that have occurred through the Confessors in reformed Houses, for it is too scandalous. Suffice it to say that all the world knows that the whole Order, save a very small number of Monasteries reformed or said to be so (with which the General of the Order is at law), is in every kind of relaxation, not only having their special *peculium*, but carrying on trade, holding property, hunting, and the like.

I do not speak of the expense they bring to Houses; for, although they allege that one has to give higher payment to the Priests they call secular than to Monks who are content with food and clothing, I have found it the contrary. For besides the fact that the food and clothing of the Monks amounts to whatever they like, there is a perpetual concourse of Monks; so that one finds dozens at a time coming for refreshment to Monasteries of women, and the Confessors’ table is a very good *table d’hôte*. Bachelors are sent, whose Doctorat expenses one must pay. There are nephews of Confessors to be provided for; and so many other abuses that, were they written down, they would amaze honest folk, and would cause those who dare to come before Parliament, asking permission to continue them, to blush.’¹

The occasion of escape for Port Royal from this plague of monks now occurred. The Bishop of Langres co-operated with Angélique in effecting the change. They united too in founding a new Institution, devoted to the worship of the Holy Sacrament, at first as a separate House but afterwards incorporated with Port Royal. So dear was it to Angélique, that when some other nuns took the name of *Filles du S. Sacrement*, she was guilty, she owns to her nephew, of a passing feeling of jealousy.

Narrative of the Mère Angélique (continued)

‘Shortly before I communicated with this Bishop, the General of our Order (M. Boucherat) had died. He was

¹ *Relation contenant les raisons qui ont engagé la Mère Marie-Angélique Arnauld à faire sortir son monastère de la juridiction de l’Ordre de Cîteaux, pour le soumettre à celle de l’ordinaire. Par la Mère Marie-Angélique elle-même, Mémoires pour servir . . .*, vol. i, pp. 375, 378–9.

a very humane man, and had never refused me anything I had wanted. He died directly after he had given us the permits for our removal. There was appointed in his place one of a tiresome disposition, who threatened to annul all the permissions which his predecessor had given us for Reform; he did actually deprive us of the good Abbé de la Charmoye (M. Mauguier) who had been given us as Superior. That grieved us very much, and the said Bishop was distressed also for the Sisters whom he had reformed as we were.

‘As we spoke to him of this trouble, he said to the Mère Agnès and to me, that for some years he had had in his mind the thought of creating a Religious Institute, which should have as chief object to adore and honour the Holy Sacrament at the Altar; and that for this there should be some one always present day and night. Now it is to be observed that, while we were still at the *Maison des Champs*, our General dying, as I have said, directly after he had given us permission to remove to Paris, we resolved and put into execution, that we would be turn by turn all day before the Holy Sacrament. And a little later, the Abbot of Clairvaux (M. l’Argentier), who was in our favour, dying also, we added the night to the day, in order to pray God that He would be pleased to protect us against the successors of these Abbots, declared enemies of Reform. This movement which God had given us made us receive with great joy that of this Bishop; and we at once implored him with ardour to approve our sending to Rome for permission to begin this Institute. There was great discussion to decide whether a new House should be founded, or if it should be established in this. The final decision was for a new House, with the Rule of S. Augustine. Steps were taken towards this, and Madame de Longueville (Louise de Bourbon-Soissons),¹ who came here pretty often through an occasion which I will relate, was begged to consent that the supplication to the Holy Father should be presented in her name, and that she should be declared Founder, which she granted. And thereupon a Doctor of the Sorbonne (M. de Feron) was asked to go expressly to Rome, which he did. And, while he was there, we received new threats from our General, which obliged us to write to him (M. de Feron) to try and obtain a Brief replacing us under the Jurisdiction of the Bishop. He obtained both, and in a fairly short space of time, and sent them us. This was in 1627.

¹ This lady was first wife to that M. de Longueville concerned later, together with his better-known second wife, Condé’s sister, in the *Fronde*.

‘The Divine Providence caused that, at this time, a lady (Madame Bardeau) who was rich and without children, wishing to leave a part of her property to God and to the poor, took counsel of another (Mademoiselle Feu), who was her intimate friend and very virtuous, as to how she should employ a part of what she destined for pious works. The latter had heard the new Institute spoken of, and, being one of our friends, told her the scheme proposed and that she should see whether God inspired her to contribute. This lady was taken straightway with devotion for it, and begged me to consent to her leaving us in her will thirty thousand *livres*, with proviso that she should enjoy the privilege of Founder for the prayers only, and be buried in the Church of the Monastery; that, if she were to die before the House should be established, her body should be brought here (to Port Royal) in trust, and that the interest of the thirty thousand *livres* should accumulate until they were handed over on the establishment being made. We accepted the legacy, and this lady came to thank me with more humility than if we had been giving it to her instead of receiving it. She died shortly after the Bull had been obtained, and we received this legacy to help in paying for the House thirty-six thousand *livres*.’

CHAPTER IX

Changes at Port Royal.

BEFORE, however, the new scheme made further advance, a change had come over Port Royal, and a change, or disclosure, of spirit in the Bishop now director there, had brought divergence of feeling between him and Angélique. Wholly at one with him in this project, she became, though outwardly submissive, his unwilling critic as to the way it was executed.

From the first probably the Bishop of Langres had a less literal understanding than Angélique of the Christian virtues, and saw simplicity and retirement, which he praised, in less rustic and monotonous guise. The reform he had effected in his Convent of Tard near Dijon had given birth to a different order of spirituality, more striking in its manifestations but less uniform. Extreme austerities and severe penances were the practice, but tempered by compensatory indulgence and licence of spirit ; with this, cultivation of the ecstatic side of the religious life and deliberate courting of visions and miracles. He sought now, by blending the convents, to infuse this more ' eminent ' spirituality, as he deemed it, into Port Royal.

Narrative of the Mère Angélique (continued)

' The same year that our building was finished, in 1629, the Bishop,' Angélique narrates, ' having obtained a Brief to withdraw his Sisters from out the Order, as well as we, wished to effect the union of our two Houses, and to that end we sent the Mother Agnès with the Mother Geneviève de S. Augustin to that Monastery, whence afterwards he sent to us the Abbess, who had relinquished her charge (the Mother Jeanne de S. Joseph de Pourlan), with another Sister.'

The newcomer, though at first without definite post in the convent, began promptly to make changes, acting to Angélique, still in nominal charge, as critic and monitor. Certain of the nuns saw these things with impatience, though, as nuns, edified

by Angélique's humility and compliance with the wishes of her chosen Director, the Bishop.

From the narrative of our watchful Sister Angélique de Ste Agnès *de Marle de la Falaise* we learn how strongly the Mother was impressed by his apparent zeal :—

‘Three years,’ she relates, ‘after acquaintance with the Bishop of Langres, it occurred to this Prelate to send hence Nuns to Dijon, and to bring some from Dijon here, in order to unite the two Monasteries. The Mother Angélique, who revered all his opinions, willingly agreed, and consented that the Mother Agnès should go, accompanied by a Sister (in September, 1629). She was left accordingly in Paris with the Prioress and Sub-prioress, just as happy as though she had lost nothing; and she saw all things so wholly in God that, as she often told us, it never entered her mind to make a single lament, although, humanly speaking, she was left very destitute of support. She took counsel with the Prioress¹ just as cordially as though she found in her what she had lost in the Mother Coadjutrix. She even asked her advice with humility and made her hold Chapters; and, whatever unwillingness she might show, she said to her with humility: *You will do it as well as I*, considering nothing save that she had been elected by the advice of M. de Langres, and that sufficed to make her rely on her judgement and set confidence in her.

‘When she received letters from the Mother Agnès, who sent her word of all that took place at Dijon—the Rule of the Monastery, the austerity practised there and sundry other things which she described with wonderful rapture—our Mother received it in like manner, and drew apart my Sister Marie-Claire and me, to read us these beautiful letters. When we thought what took place at Dijon too harsh and too severe, she said to us with a fervour impossible rightly to depict: “Oh, my children, one must not say that. Are we not only too happy to have found the true road of truth? As for me I am delighted. M. de Langres is a man wholly of God. Whatever he may do, it will always be well done and it is impossible for me to find anything to blame.” Then she embraced us and said, *Courage, courage, for my part I am overcome with joy*; and, every time that she received letters, there were new fervours and fresh pledges to a truly religious life, of which she had notions higher and more sublime than all she could learn from the letters she received. That appeared clearly in the whole of that time, which lasted five months;

¹ Viz. Mère Jeanne, the ex-Abbess from Tard, v. *post*, p. 149.

after which we too, my Sister Marie Claire and I, went to Dijon by the like order of M. de Langres.

‘During those five months of which I have just spoken, I may say that the Mother Angélique was always as though transported with zeal and fervour, and on every occasion she spoke to me of what passed at Dijon as though the House was a mere shadow of virtue in respect of it. And although she had a great tenderness for the Mother Agnès, it was impossible for her to find anything to blame in all that was done to her, because she believed that nothing was done to her save by the order of M. de Langres. Her conclusion was always that we had not yet known what Religion was, counting herself always among the most imperfect, and then she would say: “One must take good courage. Are we not too happy to have found a man who directs us in the truth?”’¹

The Bishop of Langres had taken our Mother on her weak side. She believed she had found in him the director she always longed for, who should be merciless to her frailty and should urge her beyond her unaided powers in the pursuit of the devout life. His own devoutness, when she made his acquaintance, was unquestioned. ‘He had at that time,’ we are told, ‘altogether withdrawn from the world and from the court. He lived in his Diocese with great austerity and poverty, setting a great example of virtue, showing great charity to the poor, and in continual prayer, even by night, passing many hours before the Holy Sacrament.’² But this zeal soon passed, or, it may be, the fear of hiding his own light under a bushel drew him back to Paris and the court. As to that point of residence upon which Port Royal later so strongly insisted, he had already relaxed when projecting the new Institution of the Holy Sacrament, since he wished himself to direct a House founded in Paris.

Angélique had failed to gauge the emotionalism of this Bishop’s fervour. Through the medium of his nuns from Tard, its true complexion—akin to the emotional extremes of

¹ *Relation de la Sœur Angélique de Sainte-Agnès de Marle de la Falaise, Mémoires pour servir . . .*, vol. i, pp. 407–10.

² *Relation de ce qui a précédé l’établissement du Monastère du S. Sacrement, et de ce qui est arrivé depuis jusqu’en 1636. Par la Sœur Catherine de S. Jean Arnauld, appelée dans le monde Madame le Maistre*, loc. cit., vol. i, p. 426

the Carmelites rather than to the sober and practical spirit of the Rule of S. Benedict—soon showed unmistakably:

With the candid testimony of our nun before us, we can scarce acquit our wise but ardent Angélique herself of a loss at this time of emotional balance, of an overstrained exaltation of mood under the influence of the Bishop. And to this period of his ascendancy belong two singular incidents. In the Chapel of Port Royal, on Easter Monday, before many witnesses, Angélique worked a miracle, not indeed for the first or last time in her history, but only this once elaborately, as it were, and with publicity. For the first and only time she exercised also the force of her personal magnetism to impel a young girl to enter the convent, feeling herself irresistibly urged thereto by the spirit of God.

This latter event was so contrary to Angélique's approved practice, and appeared to herself so strange, that she narrated it, in after-life, to her nephew. We give it accordingly in her words:—¹

'Some time after our establishment in Paris, while our House was being built, a girl who was good-looking and very intelligent (*pleine d'esprit*), and who was disposed neither for marriage nor for a Convent, was walking one day with a friend beyond the gate of the Faubourg S. Jacques, and, on seeing our buildings, said: *Who are the wretches for whom this prison is being built?* Some time after she came to see one of our Nuns, whom she knew, but, since she found her departed for Dijon I made her come to the parlour, where I felt myself moved to tell her that she was leading a poor sort of life, and that she should take a decision either to marry or to become a Nun. What I said troubled her, and, as I perceived it, I told her to go and pray God before the Holy Sacrament. She did it and was so beside herself that she said: *God, give me grace not to do Thy will*, although she meant to say the opposite. She returned to the parlour extraordinarily agitated, and I felt myself taken with so violent an impulse, that I told her she was ruining herself in the world, that she ought to enter the House that very instant, although she had not come for the purpose, and she believed me and let herself be forced in. 'She acceded to my words as though in spite of herself, and was in such trouble that, on entering the Monastery, she

¹ *Entretiens . . . avec M. le Maître*, loc. cit., vol. ii, p. 322 seq.

struck her head against a wall, not knowing where she was going or what she was doing. Her trouble and agitation of mind produced a like effect in her body, so that she at once fell ill of a pleurisy, for which I bled her five times in two days. God cured her afterwards, and when she was about to finish her year of Novitiate and I, having resigned my Abbey (it was in 1630), was no longer Abbess, she asked leave from the Mother Geneviève, then Abbess, to speak to me. She told me that, being ready to profess, and having entered the Monastery only as it were by force and on my assurance, she begged me to tell her if I believed that God desired her to consecrate herself to it for her whole life. To which I replied without hesitation, in view of the ordinances of God and of the soundness of her conversion: *Yes, my Sister, I assure you that God wills it.* This is the only woman I have as it were constrained to become a Nun.'

How different her ordinary methods Angélique goes on to illustrate:—

'Two or three months ago,' she speaks as an aged and experienced Mother, 'when a woman of thirty, a lady of the Parish of S. Merri, came to see me and told me that she could not be a Nun unless she were constrained, and that I was well fitted to do her this happy violence, I replied that I had never exercised this method save once, towards a girl of twenty; but that I had been impelled by a certain movement which I did not feel for her; and that accordingly it was for her to pray God Himself to constrain her. Moreover, this lady is very virtuous and very Christian, and in a state of salvation, whereas the other was in a state of perdition. But I know several who are in as evil a way to whom I should not think of speaking with the force which God, so it seems to me, gave me for her.

'All the welfare of a Monastery,' observes Angélique again,¹ à propos of the Carmelites, 'depends on testing souls thoroughly and not making them believe God calls them to be Nuns when one sees in them few solid signs of the operation of His grace and of a sacred vocation. It is better to have few but well chosen.'

The tale of this one exception to her theory and her practice may be read at more length in the young girl's own narrative.² Be it noted here only that the questionable exercise of personal

¹ *Entretiens . . . avec M. le Maître, Mémoires pour servir . . .*, vol. ii, p. 355.

² *Post*, ch. xi.

influence was justified by results. This nun 'never regretted having entered', not even though left, by Angélique's resignation, to a new and unwelcome rule. 'Obedience,' to which she clung as a safeguard, brought her happily, we are told, through the days of the nuns from Tard.

The sudden rape, as we almost may call it, of this girl into a nunnery, stirred not unnaturally much talk among her friends, not all presumably to the convent's credit. The miracle, which was prior, in the preceding year (1628), added solely to the fair repute of Port Royal, and to that largely, in the devout world of Paris.

The incident is a clear case of faith-healing upon an hysterical child. The patient, who herself tells the tale in later life,¹ was a little cousin of the Arnaulds, child of Mme Arnauld's only brother, the Baron of Druy,—Privy Councillor, Controller of Finance, and a person generally of note. From the age of eight the child had been brought up in the convent and had already resolved to be a nun. At twelve and a half she fell ill,—a distressing cough and continuous fever were the symptoms,—and after receiving, at her request, the habit in bed, she became so much worse that her life was despaired of. She was given Extreme Unction, and the doctor, thinking she would not live through the night, gave orders he should be sent for 'to open the body'.

There followed a lethargy of eighteen hours, then violent convulsions on the right side, such that both leg and arm were contracted by two inches, and could not be extended even when the convulsions ceased. An eminent surgeon who saw her after she had been some months in this state, with frequent and violent accesses of convulsions, lying all twisted (*en S*), half in, half out of bed, declared that the contracted nerves would never recover, and that, if she walked again, it would be as a cripple and hunchback. Her regular doctors declared she never would walk.

'She was in this state for eighteen months, and was believed

¹ *Relation faite par la Sœur Magdeleine des Anges Marion de Druy, d'un Miracle opéré en sa personne l'an 1628, par la foi et les prières de la Mère Angélique*, loc. cit., vol. ii, p. 179 seq.

incurable. Then one of the Nuns had the idea that she should be dedicated to the Holy Sacrament and that it would cure her. She said so to the Mother Angélique who, with the Mother Agnès, went to see the child. She asked her if she wanted very much to be cured. The child answered that she wished it very much so that she might become a Nun, because she could not be one if she were reduced never to stir out of bed. The Mother Angélique told her, since it was her intention to give herself to God in Religion, she should offer herself especially to our Lord Jesus Christ and should make a Vow of communicating nine successive days to ask health from God. And the Mother Angélique told the Mother Agnès to make her take the Vow, which the child did with great devotion and sense of God ; and from that instant she believed without any doubt that she would be cured. This was on the Wednesday in Holy Week, April the 19th, 1628.

On the Thursday she was carried to Mass, where she communicated. On Easter Day she communicated to fulfil the precept of the Church, which caused postponement of the Novena until the Monday. She was so ill on Good Friday and Saturday, that she seemed on the point of a fresh illness ; but that did not impair in the least the firm belief she had conceived, in making her Vow, that she would be cured ; and she believed it as securely as though she had seen it.

On the Saturday, the Mother Angélique desired her to be carried before the Holy Sacrament, in the little Tribuna where she took the Communion, close to her room. As the child's father was there that day, it was resolved to tell him that the doctors and surgeons had given verdict she would never walk again, and she was carried to him in some one's arms. He was with M. d'Andilly and with his sons. They were so moved at the sight of her that they could not speak to her, and her father withdrew, saying he would come and see her another day.

On Easter Monday she was carried to Mass, where she communicated. The Mother Angélique, who had communicated in choir at the same Mass, asked one of the Sisters whom she met if the sick child had communicated ; and, receiving answer that she had, bade this Sister go and tell her to walk in the name of Our Lord in the Holy Sacrament. The Sister excused herself, and begged her to go herself ; which she did, wearing still her Church-cloak. Approaching the sick child with a countenance all lit up, she said to her : *My daughter, trust in God* ; and, taking her by the hand, *Rise in obedience to the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Holy Sacrament.* The child rose to her feet (which she had not done for more

than five months), and climbed eight steps all alone, having on only her stockings and no shoes, to go to her room.’¹

The child, in brief, was cured; before the novena was finished, completely so. The contracted limbs re-stretched, and even the cough, original cause, it was supposed, of the illness, disappeared. The child walked about, exploring the new building, taking her place in the choir, as well as any one. The doctors who had pronounced the case incurable gave their testimony now to a ‘miracle’.

This event brought a great concourse of visitors to Port Royal, all who heard of the cure desiring to see the patient. ‘She scarce had left one parlour before she was asked for in another. She had not time even to take her meals without sundry interruptions. The Mother Angélique feared it was indiscreet to expose her to such fatigue and that it was tempting God. But it could not be remedied; and she went on without being any the worse.’²

The tale is of the common order of miracles. It is not lacking, however, in a picturesque touch, conveying already a feeling for the charm of rustic *naïveté* which is more peculiar to Port Royal, and characteristic of the narratives,—not so much of the nuns, whose eyes seldom stray beyond their Convent,—but of the recluses, the *Messieurs* of Port Royal, who were presently to gather round it. The same touch introduces also Saint-Cyran who, already acquainted with Angélique, had a watchful eye on the Convent, though as yet without authority there.

The sick child’s father, coming to see her one day during her illness, brought with him a peasant from Grenoble, ‘very simple, but so filled with God that it was marvellous to hear him. Directly this good man saw the child he said to her: *Little lamb* (petite brebiette) *of our Lord, the good God will be your doctor, yes, my little sister*; and he repeated several times, *God will be your doctor.*’³

After the cure, this peasant—Frère Antoine they called him—came again with her father.

‘He said to her with delight: *Well! my little sister, little*

¹ *Relation . . . d’un Miracle . . .*, loc. cit., pp. 183–5.

² *Ib.*, p. 186.

³ *Ib.*, p. 182.

lamb of our Lord, did I not tell you truly that God would be your doctor? Monsieur the Abbé of Saint-Cyran came also while she was with this good peasant, and, wishing to make him talk to try his spirit, he said to him, as though blaming the proceeding of the Mother Angélique in this matter: "What do you think, *mon Frère*, of the presumption and boldness of Madame of Port Royal, who has sought to do like S. Peter, saying to this child, Rise in the name of Jesus Christ?" To which he replied, *I say, Monsieur, that it was not presumption, but her faith and her charity which induced her to do it*; and he maintained always that it was by the spirit of God.¹

Reading between the lines of our nun's narrative, we may surmise that the question was designed, not solely to 'try the spirit' of this pious peasant, but to convey also a warning to Angélique who, whatever her simple charity of purpose, had by this miracle entered upon a dangerous path and sadly disturbed the quiet tenor of convent routine.

The notoriety of the cure gave a great impetus to the worship of the Holy Sacrament at Port Royal. The Bishop of Langres hoped to turn this to the furtherance of his new institute. But one miracle was not enough. Port Royal fell now into the common line of ambitious convents, advertising its virtue, and deliberately striving after visions and miracles.

We may read of these things as they came to the later knowledge of Angélique the niece. Her account of a failure in miracles is not without piquancy after this tale of success:—

'About this time the devotion for the Holy Sacrament greatly spread, and the little chapel of Port Royal began to be much frequented for Novenas, and many Masses were said daily. All this favoured the project of establishing the new Order. But for this a human method was employed. In addition to the care taken to secure the interest of influential persons, it was desired also that God should declare Himself by miracles and revelations. To this end all the Nuns, and especially those who were the most virtuous, were obliged to say prayers, make retreats, and undergo extreme penances to induce God to make His will known, or rather to reveal it to them. For after these practices they were made to give an account of all they had experienced in these retreats, and of all the views and opinions God had given them.

¹ *Relation . . . d'un Miracle . . .*, loc. cit., p. 186.

'This did great harm to a very good Nun, who was afterwards elected Abbess when the Mother Angélique resigned, and who was called the Mother Geneviève *le Tardif*. She was one of the thirty-one Novices from Maubuisson, and had been always so extraordinarily virtuous that, although in no other way remarkable, and although the Mother Angélique did not proclaim her, yet everybody esteemed her and many styled her the Saint; so much so that when Monsieur, brother of the King, came once to Port Royal des Champs and wished to see the Community, he asked to see *the Saint*. But the Mother Angélique did not thus display her relics to everybody; and, for fear of losing them, she took great care to hide them.

'After they were in Paris, it was no longer the same; and, as the Mother Angélique was entirely submissive to M. de Langres, from the idea she had always had that, because she had entered ill upon her office, she ought not to exercise authority except when she could find no persons in whose hands she could place it, she allowed this new Director and all his associates' (the Fathers of the Oratory were introduced by the Bishop to Port Royal and appear to have shared his injudicious spirit) 'to act as they thought good. They did accordingly great injury to this Sister, whom they drew out of her simplicity and whom they made speak incessantly of all her views about the new Order, taking all her thoughts for revelations. I have recently burned several of her letters directed to M. Feron, who was then in Rome to solicit Bulls of Foundation for this new Order; in the which she sent him the ideas that came to her every day, as proofs of God's design, and this in so pitiable a manner that I judged they could serve no purpose, unless that which may be sufficiently gathered from the sequel of events, namely to teach that people should be left in their place, and that silence and retreat is that of a Nun.

'In order to try also the path of miracles, they undertook to perform one upon the person of a Nun deaf and dumb from her infancy, one of the original Nuns whom the Mother Angélique had found at Port Royal when she became Abbess.' (It was that same nun who had voluntarily joined in the early Reform, cf. Chap. II, p. 29). 'She was called Mother Anne-Marie *Johannet*. With this object the most zealous of them resolved to spend the night watching before the Holy Sacrament and to petition this miracle. They took with them this good Sister, whom they set in the centre of the choir, surrounded with sixteen candles lighted in honour of the sixteen attributes of Jesus Christ in the Holy Sacrament. And from time to time they attempted the miracle, speaking

to her and making her try to speak. But they succeeded no better than Gehazi, and it was needful to wait for an Elisha to give life to a design so little animated by the spirit of God in its commencement.’¹

The niece, Mother Angélique de S. Jean, writes, with this unwonted irony, in the light of after-events. Our Mother Angélique was still under the ascendancy of the Bishop, deeply impressed by his virtue and unable to criticize anything done by his orders. Such was the power upon her of the life-long cherished thought that her ill-acquired authority obliged her to obedience and submission. Not until she had laid that authority actually down did her judgement recover its freedom, and then involuntary criticism, however silenced, soon undermined her reverence for this director and his methods.

Another nun introduces us yet more intimately to the life of the convent under this Rule, and to the follies brought about by the injudicious spirit of the Bishop and of the Fathers of the Oratory associated with him:—

‘These good Fathers were very zealous in the service of souls and took note of all their motions; but they attributed the cause to the designs of God upon these souls, and thus all the corruptions of nature, and the inclinations it produces, were matters for compassion. Thus one was led to feel pity for one’s state, one believed that God had great purposes for us, and one trifled in eternal talking and doing nothing to correct oneself. If one did anything, one was heartily praised as though for some heroic action; while if, on the contrary, one did nothing but let oneself go to trifling, as happened sometimes with me, I was said to deserve pity, because I had great difficulty.

‘This was carried so far that, in truth, most extraordinary and strange things occurred to sundry Nuns, and there is reason to believe that the evil spirit made sport of us. Each one played her rôle. There was one with a very weak intellect, and slightly impaired, whom I had seen before as a very humble Nun, always in prayer, useful, and loving work, so that the Mother Angélique took her with her when she had to leave the Convent, as when she went to Lys and to Paris to

¹ *Relation . . . de la Vie de la Mère Marie-Angélique Arnauld . . . par la Mère Angélique de S. Jean Arnauld, Mémoires pour servir . . .*, vol. i, p. 224 seq.

establish a new House.' (This was not, of course, the companion nun we have so largely cited, but presumably a Sister alluded to in that nun's narrative, as one who waited upon Angélique.) 'This Nun changed to such an extent under this direction that she could not be recognized. She would fall into rages and fits of anger which were terrifying; this was styled *paths and leadings of God*, but it went so far that there was much difficulty in controlling her. She would sometimes go and hide and have to be looked for with inconceivable trouble; there was alarm sometimes lest she should injure herself; she remained sometimes whole days without eating, and at other times she would eat to excess, laying hold of everything she could. It was a fine occupation for these good Fathers, this Nun who played a new rôle every day. She would come on certain occasions and accuse herself of every irregularity, and beg to be restrained for fear of returning to them. She was sometimes fastened to the fire-place with an iron chain; sometimes she was given a muzzle such as is put on calves to prevent their sucking; and this was done I believe by order of the Director, and she had besides a Directress in the House, a penitent of these Fathers and instructed in their manner of rule, to whom she spoke. This Nun greatly delighted in the attention paid her, and entertained herself with it all, till she came to do nothing more whatsoever. She was sent afterwards to Dijon where she was finally spoiled, and she became, as one was afterwards sorry to see, a very imperfect Religious.

'Others played other parts; the most imperfect were those who spoke oftenest to the Fathers, and one saw no fruits. They all repeated what they knew about their Directors; there were some who wandered about as they pleased, who talked on every opportunity, &c.; so that they became as dissipated in mind and distracted as they had before been recollected (*recueillies*). True, this was only the young ones. The seniors took no part in it at all; no pains were taken to enlighten them, and they were the more fortunate; they were amazed to see these things in the young Nuns, but their good habit of preserving silence, and of meddling with nothing, caused them to say nothing and to continue in their customary submission and silence.'¹

Things scarcely could have come to this pass while Angélique

¹ *Vies Édifiantes et Intéressantes des Religieuses de Port Royal : La vie de la Mère Marie-Geneviève de St. Augustin le Tardif . . . par les Mères Marie de l'Incarnation Le Conte, et Angélique de St. Jean Arnauld, vol. ii, p. 4 seq.*

still held the reins, even nominally, of the convent. But change set in, under the Bishop's influence, even during her rule, and, at this critical juncture, there came the opportunity she had sought so long, of resigning her post. The act had been practically accomplished before the nuns came from Tard, and awaited only ratification by the King.

CHAPTER X

Resignation of the Mère Angélique.—The days of the Nuns from Tard.

Narrative of the Mère Angélique (continued)

‘As the previous year’ (previous to the interchange of nuns with Tard) ‘the Queen, mother of the King Louis XIII, then engaged in besieging Rochelle, came to visit us, I took the opportunity of very humbly begging her Majesty to obtain from the King, as an act of grace when he should have taken that town, to grant us the right of election. Mme la Marquise de Maignelai (Marguerite de Gondi), who had come with the Queen, strongly supported my prayer, which the Queen granted us; and, on the return of the King, she asked him this grace, which was given her, and the Brevet dispatched and registered in the Grand Council. I then gave in my resignation, and the Mother Agnès, who was Coadjutrix, sent me hers from the Monastery she was at. The Mother Geneviève was elected Abbess (July the 23rd, 1630). She was one of the first Novices I had brought from Maubuisson. She was very virtuous, and the Abbess who had come (from Tard) was made Prioress.’

The Queen Mother, Marie de Medici, acceded to Angélique’s request in accordance with her customary practice of granting a favour on her first visit to any convent. The favour asked took her by surprise. But the Marquise de Maignelai reassured her, observing she need not fear to set a dangerous precedent,—other Abbesses would not follow suit. Angélique’s brother d’Andilly, then at court, also supported her request, winning thereby, we are told, much ridicule for his simplicity in letting this benefice pass out of his family.¹

The long-sought opportunity of resigning her charge came, as even Angélique must have recognized later, very inopportune for the convent. Yet so plainly in the simple line of duty did the act appear to her that, although she saw in consequence the undoing for a time of all her work, she never

¹ Note (by the Mère Angélique de S. Jean ?) to the Mère Angélique’s narrative, *Mémoires pour servir* . . . , vol. i, p. 332.

for an instant repented it. Constantly present to her mind was the illegality of her appointment. She had besides a keen feeling of the iniquity of royal nominations in general—royal ‘usurpations’, François de Sales had called them in talk with her¹—to Religious Houses. Unless an Abbess be freely elected by her nuns, her rule, she observes elsewhere, is a tyranny; though experience taught her also that nuns do not always choose wisely.

Angélique never regretted this step. But she became keenly aware of her error in placing herself and her convent in the hands of the Bishop of Langres. She accounts for it, nun-like, by undue reliance upon her own judgement.

Narrative of the Mère Angélique (continued)

‘I ought to say, in order to show the justice of God, that I had not sufficiently prayed before making the liaison with this Bishop, having engaged in it very lightly, by the guidance and discernment of my mind: not having even consulted the Mother Agnès who was at Port Royal des Champs.

‘No sooner had I quitted the Charge, than the Mother Geneviève, who had been at the Monastery of Tard and had taken its spirit, having also the Prioress² to advise her, changed by order of the Bishop the whole conduct of this House, which lay in very great docility, poverty and simplicity, which, it was said, made our Sisters perfectly stupid (*toutes bêtes*). There were several who did not know how to write when they were received; and, seeing that they were of only moderate intelligence, and could not be employed in the charges which required writing, I had judged it unnecessary for them to learn. It was at once desired that they should know how, and straightway all the cells were provided with inkstands, so that everybody might write: whereas previously only those in office had had them, or those appointed to write what was necessary for the Community. It was said that all the Sisters must be made capable of everything. Many did not stir from the Parlours, with talking to the Fathers (of the Oratory), and then they had to write in order to polish their minds.

What distressed me most, was that they gave charge of the turn and the sacristy to the most imperfect, whom I would

¹ *Entretiens . . . avec M. le Maître, Mémoires pour servir . . .*, vol. ii, p. 307.

² This Mère Jeanne from Tard, though nominally only second in command, was now clearly the actual controlling spirit.

never put in office, and that to gratify them. They were unwilling to receive any more pupils, unless daughters of a marquis or a count. They mocked at the simplicity and cooking of the Refectory. We had to have a daily change of soup, and *saupiquets*, unknown to us, had to be made, with all sorts of seasonings to which we were unaccustomed. In the Church many perfumes, elaborate linen (*plissures de linge*), and bouquets. All the world was begged to come and say Mass and preach. Every day new acquaintances were made. Together with all that, extraordinary austerities, fastings on bread and water, terrible disciplines, penances the most humiliating in the world, so that, seeing one imposed upon a very imperfect Sister, I was greatly moved, thinking it a miracle; but at the recreation the same day, seeing her joke as much as she had wept in the morning, I was all in surprise and found that everything was turned into play. To tell the truth, there were some very good Sisters who did it with goodwill and with benefit. Those who were most fastidious as to their food eat afterwards caterpillars and other filth. During recreation, they had to make fun of one another, mimicking each other, and that was called *sharpening their wits* (*se déniaiser*). I was often in distress at all this, but I said nothing; and when I asked myself secretly, *What is the good of it all?* I replied to myself, *To destroy my own judgement.*

It was easily seen, without my saying it, that I did not approve all that, and the Bishop said to me once that I did him harm there (*que je lui nuisais céans*). And when I replied that I said nothing, he answered: Your shadow does us harm (*Votre ombre nous nuit*). I said to him, *Send me where you will, I will go.* Nevertheless, he would not do it, and he employed me in soliciting for the affair of the *Maison du S. Sacrement*, whither, however, he did not wish me to go. With it all, I inured myself to everything, and lived in great harmony with the Mother Abbess and the Prioress. He did not wish me to write any more to the Mother Agnès who was in his Monastery, and I submitted; and she also ceased to write. Thus we were as separated in mind as in body.

The memory of this interlude in their history, the days of the nuns from Tard, remained long with the nuns of Port Royal. From their reminiscences we learn the indignities and slights sustained by Angélique, the ugly and degrading penances inflicted on her. We learn, too, her edifying conduct, her submissiveness—at first heartfelt, and always exemplary; further, the love she aroused in the children placed for a time

in her care. Among these children were some who, growing to be themselves Mothers of Port Royal, recorded with the rest their childish memories. The following choice of extracts may serve to show Angélique as her nuns saw her, through their love, their reverence for her saint-like virtue, their suppressed wrath at the ill-treatment she sustained.

The scene of her resignation, first, is most fully described by that young girl she had 'compelled to be a Nun'; Sister Geneviève de l'Incarnation was her name in religion, Pineau her secular name.

Account of the Mère Angélique's resignation, by Sister Geneviève de l'Incarnation Pineau.¹

'A few days after I had taken the Habit, our Mother resigned her office, and delivered over her Abbey to the authority of Monseigneur the Archbishop of Paris, at the hands of M. le Blanc, his Grand Vicar. She knelt before the Holy Sacrament in presence of a number of distinguished persons and of the whole Community, who burst into tears. She spoke in a loud voice so that all present heard her, with so much humility that she drew tears to the eyes of all who beheld her. She began by saying: "My Father, I recognize that I am unworthy of the charge of Abbess which I have exercised up to now. Therefore I am impelled by God to resign it into your hands, very humbly begging you to forgive me all the faults I have committed in the rule of this Monastery. I ask also forgiveness very humbly from all my Sisters for my want of charity and for all my other shortcomings in regard to them. I implore you very humbly, my Father, to give me penance." When she had said this, she delivered the keys of the Monastery into the hands of M. le Blanc, who received them, and said to her: "My Mother, your humility forces you to believe that you have committed a number of faults in the rule of this Monastery, and it is this which makes you ask penance. This feeling is very laudable in you. But I am forced, on behalf of Monseigneur the Archbishop, to thank you for all the trouble you have taken from the time that God placed you, so many years ago, in this office. I thank you for your good government, which has been pleasing to God, since He has

¹ *Relation sur la vocation et la vie de la Sœur Geneviève de l'Incarnation Pineau . . . écrite en partie par elle-même, Vies . . . des Religieuses de Port-Royal, vol. ii, p. 65 seq.*

given it His blessing. For this reason all they who are concerned in the welfare of this House desire that you should continue the exercise of your charge; and as for me, I beg you to do so, and I believe that God requires it of you." Our Mother answered him: "My Father, it was not God who placed me in this post, but men who usurped it for me. This is what obliges me to deliver it into your hands; and you will grant me, if it please you, my Father, the grace of accepting." He replied: "But, my Mother, your Nuns (*vos Filles*) will not permit it: their tears show it plainly; and they implore you not to give them into any other hands than your own." Our Mother responded: "*My Father, I still hold their wills in my hands: that is why I do not ask their permission.*" Whereupon he said to her: "I see that you are resolved to give up your charge; I accept accordingly your resignation, and the Community will pray God to obtain from Him the light required to make a good choice, that shall be to His glory, and for the spiritual welfare of the Community."

Our Mother, having thus resigned, took the lowest place in the Community. The Superiors, who acted in her place, assisted her greatly in this. For, as she sought only to humiliate herself, to mortify herself and be hidden among the Sisters in general, God permitted the same thought of humiliating her to enter the mind of certain persons, who had only too much power in the House. They gave her the means of satisfying her desire, under pretext that she would derive great spiritual benefit by being as much humiliated and abased as she had been exalted. This principle of charity was the ground for beginning to wish to deprive her of knowledge of the affairs of the House, as well as of all those of her family. In the sequel her advice was never asked save when it could not be dispensed with, and hardly anything private was communicated to her. I believe that she was very well aware of this; but it was a great means of attaining to the design she had in her heart of being the least of the Sisters. For this reason she embraced it with all her heart and with joy. Whatever authority was exercised over her, she yielded yet more. In brief she did all she could to hide herself and be lost in the Community, like a drop of water in the ocean. I know that others will say more on this point, which was carried, I am assured, to excess, both as to the mortifications which she practised by the movement God had given her, and as to those which were imposed upon her by a rule which He permitted to be exercised over her.'

*Narrative of the Mère Marie de Ste. Magdeleine du Fargis.*¹

'When first I entered here as a pupil, I remember that she (the Mother Angélique) was at the pains of coming often to our room to teach us, before she had resigned. I do not know whether there was any special distress at that time; but I remember only that I often saw her come quite expressly to make us pray to God for the poor. Which she did with so much warmth that it has always remained in my mind.

'While the building was going on at Port Royal of Paris (1628), the contractor was seized with the plague and died of it, he and his wife. They left two children, a boy and a girl. As the girl was not yet weaned, the Mother Angélique saw to her being nurtured and kept; I do not know for how long, only I remember that I often saw her make linen and clothes. As for the boy, who was already pretty big, he worked at the building; and, whenever the Mother found him there, she took care to make him repeat his Catechism.

'I have heard Sisters, who had good means of knowing, say that, when the Mother Jeanne de S. Joseph from Tard came here in 1630, the Mother Angélique, who had not yet resigned, showed from the first entire confidence in her and deference for all her advice. So that when the Mother Jeanne told her that she disapproved of something, whatever it might be, she

¹ *Mémoires pour servir . . .*, vol. ii, p. 409 seq. Cf. *Vies . . . des Religieuses . . .*, vol. ii, p. 107 seq. This nun was the only daughter of a Madame du Fargis who, after three years passed, though without vows, in the Carmelites, became at court the chief attendant or confidant of the Queen Anne of Austria, played her share in the court intrigues, both gallant and political, and was 'persecuted', as her daughter saw the matter, by Richelieu. This only daughter was sent at the age of seven, on the recommendation of the Mother Magdeleine of the Carmelites (in 1626), to be brought up at Port Royal. She remained to take the vows, withstanding the wishes of her father (ambassador to Spain), who, left by his son's death without other child, even entreated her on his knees to 'return to him and to the world'. Her fortitude on this occasion earned her the characteristic warning from the Mother Angélique: '*You are too strong, my Daughter; humble yourself.*' She lived to be one of the last abbesses of Port Royal, surviving not only the Mothers Angélique and Agnès, but even their niece Angélique de S. Jean, and presenting to the last a brave and dignified front to persecution. A child at the time we are now treating of, she gives in her narrative a compound of childish reminiscence with hearsay from other nuns and confidences let fall in later years by the Mère Angélique herself.

bade her at once set it to rights. I remember in this connexion that once, at the very first arrival of the Mothers from Tard or Dijon, the order was given that the grille of the Parlour should no longer be opened to certain persons to whom it had always been opened before, in particular to M. Feron. Mother Angélique obeyed this order, without manifesting the slightest trouble. On the contrary, when a Sister who was in our room at that time said to her one day, before us, that she could not make up her mind to go and see M. Feron, who had asked for her, without opening the grille, after having always opened it for him before, the Mother said to her that she had already spoken to this gentleman with the grille closed and that it had not troubled her. She added several things, which I do not recall, to reconcile her to it. I remember only that she spoke so happily and with so much apparent approval of all the things that were being ordered new, that it seemed as though they were all in conformity with her views.

‘Nevertheless, she has told me since that she was distressed often enough about several things, over which she had reason to be. She told me further that, when there came to her some thought, why things which seemed to her not over-desirable were ordered, she used to say at once to herself : “ *God permits it to make me die to myself. It is of no great importance that outside things should be in one manner or another, but it is very important to renounce self.*” She has often quoted to me in this connexion what stands in Thauler : “ *God often blinds a great number of just persons, that a soul may be mortified to his mind.*” And I have since heard her say that she never expressed any pain at all that took place during this time, not even to persons the most opposed to all the new regulations ; and that, when she was with these persons and they testified their pain to her, it was precisely then that she believed herself the more pledged to let nothing of what she thought appear.

‘At this same time took place the first Election. I remember only one or two things worth remarking. God permitted me to be present at the resignation of the Mother Angélique. What surprised me was the joy with which she made it. For, while the Sisters showed much affliction, she spoke with great joy. I do not know whether anybody remembers better than I what took place on this occasion between her and the Father de Gondi’ (Brother of the Archbishop of Paris, one of the Fathers of the Oratory). ‘I know well that there was something about which he was dissatisfied for a long time. I have been told it was that he had not been given notice of the Election. I remember also that he came to see her shortly

after, and that she spoke to him with the curtain of the grille closed. I was astonished, because she had always seen him before, even before he joined the Oratory. All I can say of the matter, from my present recollections, is that she submitted in such a manner to this rule, that she paid no regard to the dissatisfaction her friends might have about it.

‘Directly after the Election, she withdrew from all things and took no part in anything at all. She would not even permit us, although we were only children, to salute her in any special manner when we met her. On one occasion I happened to meet her. As I had on very old shoes, she asked me why they did not give me new ones. All at once she stopped without finishing what she had begun. She only added: “*My God, it is very wretched to be always meddling in what does not concern one.*”

‘During this time we scarcely ever saw her, for she was in every respect a simple Nun. I have heard say that she performed penance in the Refectory and at the Chapter; and that, on the Eve of All Saints, she was made to attend the Chapter bareheaded and barefoot, although the Chapterhouse had not been built a year. And she was in consequence very ill afterwards. I do not know whether it was at the same Chapter that all the Sisters were forbidden to speak to her; a thing which she obeyed with great exactitude. She was often known to excuse herself to the Sisters who came in search of her, until they should have asked permission. But the Sisters did not importune her at all in this respect. There were some even who displayed with great freedom more esteem and affection for the Mother Jeanne who was in control,¹ than for her; and sometimes even before the Mother Angélique herself, and in a contemptuous manner. She did not show the smallest distress at all that; but, on the contrary, was very glad. And it is a thing I have always observed in her, that, when persons to whom she had afforded much kindness and help, come to leave her in order to subject themselves to others, and afterwards express more regard for those others than for her, she never shows any displeasure, but, on the contrary, is very glad of it.

‘Three or four months after the Election, she was made Mistress of the pupils; in which post she began to act as though she was there to serve.” She swept the room and did all the other most disagreeable things. In respect of the control, she treated us with much charity, trying to make us do what she wished by reasoning and by kindness. She so adapted herself to us all that there was not one of us but

¹ v. *ante*, p. 150, and note.

believed she had a special affection for her. Sometimes I used to try and find out which of us she loved most ; but it was impossible for me to discover. There was a girl who was discontented here and of a troublesome temper, finding something to object to whatever was done, and never showing any feeling of piety. The Mother Angélique has since told me that she had great difficulty in tolerating her. Nevertheless, all the time she was in our room, she displayed so much charity for her that it was believed she felt for her a quite special affection. She continued to show her the same charity when she went to the *Maison du S. Sacrement*, whence she often wrote to her. When she (the pupil) wished to leave, she still took great care of her, so much so that she won her in a measure, at any rate for a time. She gave her subsequently particular assistance, and that with extraordinary kindness. But there are many persons who know about that better than I. I will add only what she told me on this point, namely that, when once God had given her a person, she always felt kindness for her whatever she might do, and that she believed herself compelled to give help so long as the said person should leave it in her power. And she has told me also since, à propos of women who proposed to be Nuns, that every time one came, she looked upon her as a soul whom God had given her, and that she did not feel discharged of her when it came to pass that she could not keep her, because she held she was compelled to have the care until God should discharge her.

‘But to return to what I was saying about the time when she was in the children’s room : she wished us always to have great respect for the Mother who was then Abbess, and she set us the example, showing her all manner of submission as the least Nun of the House might have done. She never spoke to her except on her knees, and knelt also whenever she met her. Once, when we had committed a fault, which however was only a childishness, it was told to the Mother Abbess, who thought the matter was more important ; in consequence she told Mother Angélique not to allow us to receive communion the next day, which was the Epiphany. The Mother spoke to us, and recognized that this fault was not so great as she (the Abbess) thought it. She would not, however, permit us to communicate, without first taking us to beg the Mother Geneviève to allow us.

‘During all the time she was with us, she was under the Direction of the Mother Jeanne de S. Joseph (the former Abbess of Tard), to whom she rendered such exact submission that she did nothing at all without leave, very often even in matters which concerned only us.

'She was made to undergo all sorts of humiliation and mortification. Two or three times an account of her life was read in the Refectory. All sorts of humiliating things were read in it, and things that might well have made a person, with less humility than she had, angry. Among others, she told me that they read one time that *she held herself at church wallowing like a pig*; and in conclusion that, *if she were made Superior of the Monastère du S. Sacrement, she would make it a House of disorder as she had of Port Royal*; and many other similar things. Throughout this reading she went on with her dinner, no more moved than if some indifferent matter had been said. After dinner the Mother Jeanne asked her why she had gone on eating during this reading, and she said to her: "*That she had not thought about it at all.*"

'After she had been Mistress of the children for two years, she was taken from us, and she began a great retreat. During this time, which lasted about three months, she was in the Novitiate and walked last.

'I remember that, when all the children were in the Refectory, she was made to rise from table and a basket full of filth was hung round her neck and she was then led from table to table while they said: "*My Sisters, look at this wretched creature, whose spirit is more full of perverted opinions than this basket is of filth.*" I forget the rest of what was in the paper, which they read at all the tables one after the other, even at that of the children, where I was. The Mother during that reading had a very devout air, even as though she recognized as true all that was in the paper.

'Another time she came to the Refectory with a great paper mask, and they said: "*My Sisters, pray to God for this hypocrite, pray God that He may convert her truly.*"

'I have forgotten to say that at the first, after she had given in her resignation, several things were said to her in Chapter, to give her to understand that *it was no great deed to have resigned her Abbey*; and, among others, *that she had done nothing more than she ought, that it was incumbent upon her*; and various other things which she sustained with joy.

'She has often told me that she had always such joy at being no longer in office, that it made her surmount all the pain she might have had at various things, which might well have given it her.'

*Narrative of the Mère Marie Dorothée de l'Incarnation Le Conte*¹

'As I spoke one day to Mother Angélique about the time when the Mothers from Burgundy were here, she told me she had seen very clearly that many things were not as they should be; but that the thought that it served to make her renounce her own judgement and her own likings sufficed to prevent her speaking. And she added, à propos of the fact that she was not then in control, that this did not give her occasion to regret having resigned, that she had never regretted it, and that she had always given praise to God Who had led her to do so by His Spirit, as well for her own good as for that of others. She told me further that M. de Langres had once told her he would have to remove her from the House, because she hindered him and the Mothers from Burgundy from acting with the freedom required for bringing the Sisters into an *eminent* devotion; that she had answered him he might do what he would with her, and that God knew she would be very glad, although she did not know where they would have placed her. And she bade me observe that the House was preserved from the spiritual disorders that might have resulted from this Rule, only by the gentleness, silence and submission of the old Nuns (*les Anciennes*); whereas, if they had revolted, there would have been a terrible scandal, and they would have suffered greatly.'

Angélique nevertheless, however sustained by the belief she had done right to lay down her ill-gotten charge, and by her personal benefit in a mortified judgement, was hard-pressed more than once. She might preserve an attitude of reverent submission during the disgusting penance of the basket of filth, and of indifference—not unmingled apparently, for all her nun's virtue, with contempt—when her legendary life was read out at table. But she was touched to the quick when her letters from S. François de Sales were treated with obloquy. She tells her nephew à propos of this correspondence:—

'I kept these letters carefully until my resignation of the title of Abbess. But subsequently the Mothers from Dijon, who thought their own spirituality far above that of M. de

¹ *Mémoires pour servir . . .*, vol. ii, p. 423 seq. This nun made her profession at Port Royal in 1626 and lived to exercise authority, as prioress, in the convent, and also to experience the 'persecution' which befell it. v. *Vies . . . des Religieuses*, vol. ii, p. 27 seq.

Genève, and all his letters a slight thing in comparison with their pre-eminent devotion, took them from me. And, what was pitiable, they set so little store by what I looked upon as relics, all written and signed as they were by the hand of the Saint, that they made use of them to cover some pots of preserve, as I myself saw, without venturing to complain. Some however were saved from this shipwreck.¹

Yet more keenly did she feel the change of spirit in the convent in respect of charity and disinterestedness. The central point of her reform had been the acceptance of nuns without dower; in the legend of her life, read to her scorn, she was reproached accordingly with neglect of the convent's interest, and under the new rule only rich girls of good birth were admitted. Worst of all, it was proposed to send away two of Angélique's special protégées.

She told her nuns,² years after, speaking of the need for self-subdual:—

'that there had occurred at this time a thing which gave her deep pain and greatly distressed her; and that, when some one spoke to her about it, and said to her, "But what good does it serve," God had given her grace to reply instantly, "It serves to make me die to myself"; that this was the thought He gave her in all things which she did not like, which were at that time very many.

'A sister begged her to tell what it was which had distressed her so much; she related to us that there had been two girls in a village whom the seigneur of the place had resolved to ruin, that she had been told of it and advised it would be a work of charity to save them from this peril by finding a place for them; that she had had them brought for that purpose and, as nothing suitable was found, she had taken them into the House until they should be placed; and that the Mother Geneviève came to her one day to ask where they came from, saying it was in order to send them back; that she named the place and said nothing else; but that she felt it acutely, and shed many tears over it, without, however, saying a word.

'She added, that she had extreme difficulty in preventing herself from talking on certain occasions, and about things

¹ *Entretiens . . . avec M. le Maître, Mémoires pour servir . . .*, vol. ii, p. 300.

² *Entretiens ou Conférences de la Mère Angélique*, p. 301 seq.

trivial enough ; that one day, at the Chapter, when my Sister Marie de Sainte Claire was next to her and, on being spoken to, did not stir, she pulled her dress gently to point out to her what she was to do, whereupon she was reproved and asked what she was meddling for. Everybody took sides in the matter, indignant against the persons who had treated the Mother in this manner. For the Sisters who were there at the time tell of many other and strange things. Upon which she said that they were perfectly right, and that it was not her place then to meddle with anything at all.'

CHAPTER XI

Tale of the girl forcibly induced to become a nun.

LEAVING Port Royal for the moment under this rule of strangers, we may look back upon the girl so curiously 'forced' at this time 'to be a nun', with her own eyes, and upon the convent as she then saw it. The tale is of a girl who, whether led by secret unacknowledged movements of piety or, as it seemed to her afterwards, in mere wantonness, played with the notion of monastic life till her imagination was dominated by it and, against all her acknowledged tastes and reasoned convictions, she became a nun. As a psychological document the story is incomplete, for the first chapter, the 'years of innocence' and the influences then at work, is missing; there is one indication, her early and forgotten vow (cf. p. 181), that the later fervour was a recrudescence of impressions then received. The narrative remains of no small interest, in its naïve display of the conflict between 'nature' and 'grace', between the clear, conscious, ordered field of desire and thought and the untracked spontaneous movements, the inexplicable rise to the surface of what psychologists have named 'sub-conscious' life. In the case of this nun the conflict was peculiarly marked, the reflex devout impulses, though they conquered and though their victory brought peace of mind, yet conquering as an extraneous and subduing force, not as support to deliberate effort. At the decisive moment the influence of the Mère Angélique was, as already narrated, brought to bear, she too moved by an impulse that seemed foreign to her will, a strong 'movement of grace' that urged her to a rare exercise of authority. Such movements were, in the Mère Angélique, the fruit and crown of a life bent to one purpose; they confirmed instead of subduing her will, leading her only beyond prudence in its expression. Their analogy is with the inspira-

tions of genius, rather than with the 'unconscious' acts of hysterical subjects. In this instance accordingly, though it fell in a time of high-strung fervour, and though the action was one she would never repeat, the result showed her insight. The young girl found peace and happiness in the ordered activity of convent life. Her active though untutored intellect, quick in girlhood to reflect the rationalizing and sceptical tendencies she came across, faintly anticipating in crude effort thoughts that were to gain ascendancy in another age, was subdued to silence before the daily contemplation of the Christian mysteries. Her activities had an outlet in household duties; she aided the beloved Mother in the convent cares, and enjoyed her intercourse and confidence. In later life she became one of the props of the convent under 'persecution', and, in criticism of the persecutors and graphic description of the bishops and others who sought to enforce, and the nuns who accepted, the Formula, she found a new and legitimate, if not very spiritual, exercise for her intellect. From her pen is one of the most detailed of the later accounts, belonging, however, to a time which our limits do not include. Only this first and personal tale, falling as it does within the days of the Mère Angélique and illustrating her rule at the moment when she was on the point of laying down authority, comes here in place.

*Narrative of the Conversion of Sœur Geneviève de l'Incarnation Pineau, and of her Entrance into Religion, by herself.*¹

'It appears to me that I cannot better exhibit the magnitude of the grace I have received from God, through the medium of our very dear Mother Marie Angélique de Sainte Magdeleine, than by displaying my previous evil disposition, which deserved rather the anger and wrath of God than the grace He has done me by His sole goodness and mercy. I think that, by charity, I shall be forgiven the fault I commit in exposing the extremity of my wretchedness and of the darkness which blinded me. Shame and confusion would bid me bury it in perpetual silence, but I cannot abstain from speaking of it, in order to manifest the more the glory due to a holy soul whom I honour with great respect, and for whom I have a very special veneration,

¹ *Vies . . . des Religieuses de Port-Royal*, vol. ii, p. 33 seq.

because God gave her so penetrating a light that she was able to discern a glimmer of His grace hidden in the utmost depths of an abyss of death, such as I was through sin which had rendered me vile and had degraded me below all created things.

‘I had lived innocently enough up to the age of seventeen, when I began to open my eyes to behold vanity. The first trap the Devil set to bring me into the way of perdition was the companionship of certain girls of my acquaintance, who excelled in the knowledge of all that could please the world and who instructed others in the most subtle inventions of vanity. It is inconceivable what harm this dangerous society did me. I liked them very much and gladly followed their advice as a matter of great consequence, letting it occupy a large place in my mind. Everything they said was precious to me, and I should have felt it a most serious fault to neglect any of their precepts of vanity. I imitated them in all that the world loves and esteems, as rules well established according to the supreme perfection of worldly wisdom. This evil manner of intercourse with them disordered me greatly in a short time, and changed me into a different person.

‘They had other kinds of license and took liberties yet more dangerous. But God gave me grace to take no part in these, besides that I had a great natural aversion which held me aloof, and might have sufficed to withdraw me from their society had I not had a prodigious attachment to the vanities which attracted me in them. This disorder was not apparent to the persons in authority over them, nor even to the world, for they had a great deal of human respect which restrained them and caused them to pass in society for virtuous and modest. As for me, although I had also much human respect, it would not have sufficed to restrain me had God not held me by His goodness and by special grace; and, without seeking for time and place to be disordered in secret, I should have committed freely in the face of the world the faults which the others hid with great care, because my humour would endure no constraint. Nevertheless I do not remember that, in this great peril, any indecent image ever entered my thought, because at the slightest approach of any such thing there arose in my mind a trouble which effaced it before it began to form,

‘The greatest evil which this dangerous companionship brought me was to make me love the world, vanity, society, plays, songs, excursions, in which I took extraordinary pleasure, and in brief all other amusements learnt by those wise in the world, for I had no other study than that of pleasing it. But

as I greatly loved the world, I desired nothing more than to be loved by it.

‘To attain this there was no sort of artifice which I would not have employed. I spent days and nights in this criminal study ; and since I succeeded according to my design, it was the crown of my misfortune, for the gratification I found made me love the ill which was causing my death. I was very much afraid of seeing myself cured, and my passion was so extreme that, of all the things I saw, none pleased me save in proportion as the world was more or less in it. And to say the truth, I became a little world myself, since I was all transformed into it. This is the first cause of the disorders of my life, which on this point were very great.

‘The second thing which was of great prejudice to me in disordering my mind, and which set me entirely wrong, was a mixture of reading of all sorts, sacred and profane, good and bad, which I undertook in a like spirit of vanity, curiosity and impiety. I began by reading novels,¹ which I knew to be mere fables with nothing real save the lie that composes them. As I read a great many, this imprinted upon my mind a pernicious tendency to incredulity for things the most sacred, which were above my reason. This evil had most unhappy results for me. After this reading I wanted to see all manner of books, even the most curious. I examined them deeply according to my capacity, more to ascertain the turn of mind of the authors than to profit by their views ; and, a thing which is terrible, I had so much pride as to judge and condemn them all without a single exception. I despised novels as being dreams, poetry as feignings full of exaggeration, philosophers as proud persons who believed only their own understanding and whom a solitary and melancholy humour divided off from ordinary life and from association with other men. As for those who wrote upon government and regulation of morals, I condemned them as men losing their time in seeking to set bounds to a torrent and labouring in vain to subject the whole world to their laws.

‘I read books of piety like others, and even the Holy Scriptures, without respect and without submission, believing them no more true and no more worthy of honour and of reverence than the rest. For my blinded and corrupt reason made me see with a light from hell that there was nothing more substantial in these sacred Books, composed by the

¹ In the early seventeenth century, the rage for the long romantic novels which took *l'Astrée* as model, was, it will be remembered, extreme in French society.

Holy Spirit, than in the others. I thought it was a pure invention of the human mind which had made these Sacred Books, in order to keep men moral and make them love an orderly life, by giving them respect and fear for a law imposed by a God. I said : To give men laws and precepts ordained by men, would be to run the risk of having them despised : that is why, seeing that thus the world would be brought into horrible confusion, the idea occurred of propounding Divine Commandments, with promises of an external reward for those who should keep them, and with threats of punishment equally eternal for those who should despise them.

‘ But when I came to think that there was no other way of assuring oneself of the truth of the Church than by entire and respectful submission to the Holy Scriptures, and that these Scriptures oblige us to believe in an original sin, which caused a God to descend from heaven to earth to be made man, that He might live like other men, and be crucified with infamy, and all that to give satisfaction to God His Father for the sin of men ; and when, together with that, I considered the rest of the mysteries which the Church enjoins us to believe and adore, I cannot say what impieties passed through my mind. And it could only have been the Devil who could have given me the thoughts I had, which did not spring from my own mind, since, now that he is at a greater distance from me, I find it impossible to express them and to exhibit the motions that agitated me excessively against God Himself and against all that is most holy in the Church.

‘ Not but what I believed indeed still that there was a God. My reason convinced me of it by the things created, which I knew could not be works of the hand of man. I believed that there must necessarily be a principle of things visible, which should be invisible and independent of all else than itself ; and this sufficiently assured me of its divinity. I did not doubt but that He desired to be worshipped by men ; and I was persuaded that one must not offend His holy eyes by actions unworthy of His presence, which I knew to be in every place. But in brief all my reasoning brought me back to the law of nature, in the which men worship a God by the knowledge that the light of reason gives them of one. For it seemed to me unworthy of the justice and of the holiness of a God merciful and full of goodness, to command men to worship, love and serve Him, while obliging them to believe, and to submit to, things so contrary to their reason and to their knowledge as are the mysteries which the Church believes in and adores, since He has given them this reason only to discern and judge between the true and the false.

‘When I saw, in the Holy Scripture, that humility was very strictly enjoined, I said, speaking humanly in the darkness of my spirit : “What is there happier or more contented than one who, desiring no honour and setting himself below everybody, meets with no one who is in his way or who opposes his designs ?” When I reflected upon the commandments to love our enemies, to do good to those who wish us evil, to despise riches, greatness, and honour, to love purity, labour, and lowliness, in order to follow Christ crucified, and, in general, the practice of all the Christian and evangelical virtues, that hold in captivity all unruly passions and inclinations, and, with that, upon the hope given of seeing a God, of enjoying Him in heaven, and of being for ever blessed in the possession of a crown of eternal glory, I said : “This is the only way of making the mind of man perfectly happy upon earth, and more so a thousand times than one who should enjoy the empire of the world.” Then I set in comparison a man abandoned to all the unruly desires of his passions, of hatred, pride, anger, ambition, and of all the remaining vices that follow the one the other. I looked upon him as possessed by so many furies, who would carry him beyond bounds into all kinds of excess, who would make him captive and miserable under the dominion of his passions, and who would little by little devour him, making him hope for a satisfaction that they could not give him ; and when I added to that the fear given of a God, of his judgements and of the eternal pains of a Hell, I said : “That is the height of all the miseries of life. For what good, what repose and what satisfaction can he have who finds nothing upon earth or in heaven capable of filling the stretch and compass of his unruly desires.” I drew from that the necessary consequence that it was safest to follow the path of virtue in order to live happily in this world, and I believed that it sufficed to practise it on so bad a principle. So that I said, “by observing this manner of life one might be happy both in this world and in the other, should that be true which the Church obliges us to believe and worship.” For I did not think that faith was necessary.

‘One may judge, by this account, of the bad and pernicious tendencies of my mind, which would believe nothing save what it could understand by its own reason. I examined thus all the virtues one after the other, and interpreted them in my own way. My blindness prevented my seeing that there are certain divine things given to us by God through the Church, because the basis of my temptation was to discover in them only a moral meaning, without any more exalted end than to preserve the nations generally in peace and union one with

another, and each man in particular satisfied with what he possessed without bearing envy to others. All this reasoning made me fall from one disorder into another yet greater. For I added impiety to the passion that I had for the world and for vanity; and this union made me incapable of apprehending any of the sacred truths which the Church commands us to adore.

‘Afterwards I passed into a state more dangerous than all I have yet told, into indifference namely towards the things of God. For I no longer disputed in my thoughts, but I remained at peace in the confidence that I was born only to live, having no view of eternity; and in consequence I wished to pass the time according to the maxims of the world, and satisfy my inclinations in all things.

‘I could not bear that the years should increase my age and I would gladly have arrested Time that I might not grow old and might never die. Thus, without any fear, I lived a life worse than death itself.

‘This evil disposition had produced in my mind an extreme distaste for everything relating to the holy service of God, and had so obliterated the feelings of Christianity that I had not the slightest submission for all that the Church and the Faith obliges us to believe; and I gave full liberty to my reason, that I might be at peace in a false and pernicious confidence. In this deathly state I had thoughts according to the malice of my heart and words conformable to the unruliness of my thoughts; so that I said impiously: “If there be a God, let Him make me a Nun and I will believe in Him.” For I desire no greater miracle.” I said this because I thought it had been easier to make a new heaven and a new earth than to change my will, and that there could be no miracle powerful enough to convince me of the truth of God save that which should take place in myself by the changing of my disposition. For I did not think it possible to make me love that which I hated to the last degree, and to make me hate that which I loved with all my heart, unless by a miracle of the true God, whom I desired to know, before worshipping Him. I will show by an incident that occurred at the time I was in this frame of mind, what an aversion I had for the Religious Life; whence it may be known that God alone could produce such a change in my spirit.

‘I was passing one day close to the walls of the Monastery of Port Royal (in Paris) on the field side; and seeing the big dormitory which was being built I asked my companions what it was. I received answer that it was Port Royal. But knowing the House no better by name than by sight, I was

obliged to ask again, "But what is Port Royal?" I was told that it was a Monastery for women. These words penetrated so deeply into my mind and touched me so acutely, on account of the great aversion I had for the Religious Life, that I began to say with terror and with a tightening of the heart which came from the horror I had for that holy manner of life: "Ah! wretched creatures that are to pass their lives in there!" I said this in the genuine feeling of my heart. For I looked upon this holy profession as the height of unhappiness and misfortune, and I could not understand that there were persons who made so wretched a condition their choice.

'If I had been told then that in a short time I should be among the number of these, with profound satisfaction, and that I should offer to God actions of grace for the mercy shown me, I believe that, had the greatest saint in Paradise told me so, I should have taken him for a false prophet. I will say more. My aversion was so extreme, that even after I had begun to visit the Monastery of Port Royal, when I saw something placed in the turn, or enter by the door of the Monastery for the use of the House, even though they were things inanimate and without reason, it seemed to me they were specially unhappy in being thus destined for use in a Monastery, and I held that the same things, when they remained in the world for similar usage, were incomparably happier. This detail will appear no doubt a folly that I ought to hide, but I tell it with the purpose of showing the obligation I am under to God for having delivered me by His goodness from manifest perdition and for having drawn me from an abyss of corruption and of sin.

'Such was the wretched condition I was in when I began to come to Port Royal, which is now my dear dwelling. I became acquainted with it without design on my part, but by a guidance as wonderful as it was secret, of the Divine Providence, which prepared my salvation by this means without my knowledge.

'It came to pass, by some chance, that she to whom I was subject according to the order of God and of nature, withdrew me from the society in which I was usually, and in which I could not hear the voice of God for the noise of the vanities and disorders of the world. As this retreat obliged me to look for interests less questionable in her eyes, somebody took me to Port Royal, where I had no acquaintance. I was forced to talk to some of the Nuns, among the old ones; which I did from complaisance, having no other impulse than the desire to see something new, in order to amuse myself and pass the time. But I dissimulated, making as if I greatly desired

it and derived from it great satisfaction, and, while speaking to these Nuns, I even conformed to their views, and pretended that I shared them. I discoursed a long time with them about the happiness of the Religious Life and the wretchedness of the world and of secular life. I listened to them with apparent submission, testifying a singular respect for their persons, for their profession and for their views. I listened to their discourse with great attention, telling them that I desired with all my heart that God would give me the grace to be a Nun, and begging them to ask it of God for me and to obtain for me this grace of His goodness. All this discourse was only a pretence ; for, had I believed the change possible, I should have greatly dreaded it. But I spoke confidently, believing without any doubt that it never would take place.

‘ When I think of the dissimulation with which I talked to these good Nuns, I know not why God has not punished me by some severe chastisement. For I responded to their good and kind and genuine discourses with nothing but feints and lies. But God suffered me in His goodness, permitting me to speak according to the purpose He had concerning me, without my having any knowledge of it ; and He made me accomplish by His grace that of which I should have been incapable by myself, had He abandoned me to the vileness of my own thoughts. This it is which compels me to admire the sovereignty of the empire of God, who disposed of me as it pleased Him according to His absolute power, acting in His strength with the independence that belongs to Him, and without as yet changing my will, all corrupt and incapable of any good.

‘ One day, when I was speaking to the Mother Prioress, I said to her that I wished with all my heart that I might be permitted to enter the Monastery for several days, and that it would be a great means of helping me to take my decision, but that I did not venture to ask, or to hope for, this blessing. She gave me no answer ; but she made known to our Mother what I had proposed and that I was resolved to enter for several days, if her goodness granted it. As our Mother does all that she can, when opportunities for kindness present themselves, to let none pass without giving testimony to God that this holy virtue is graven in the forefront of her heart, she conceived this a great means of helping me for love of Him. In this view she permitted me, by advice of certain persons of great virtue, to enter as I had requested.

‘ None of these holy persons knew that I was impelled by the mere spirit of curiosity and desire to see things that are not seen in the world. But I have reason to believe that God

considered their good intentions in giving me the grace that I have received from His mercy. Our Mother, then, permitted me to enter on the Eve of the Feast of All Saints, which was four months before my final entrance. I was in the Monastery for three days ; and I may say that I never had so tedious a time. Everything I saw seemed to me dreadful, and I would rather have died a thousand deaths than have remained. God permitted me this 'trial no doubt to show me up to what point I was opposed to His grace, and that I owe my change to His sole goodness and mercy. After these three days, I returned to the world, which I found, in my opinion, more beautiful than ever, and I felt myself most relieved to have left such a captivity. Whereas previously I had had a distaste for Religion, after this visit I had a dread horror of it, and I was quite resolved never to be a Nun. For I looked upon this holy manner of living as an insupportable torment, and could not even believe that there was any single Nun happy in her Profession. I did not, however, fail to continue my visits to Port Royal, with the customary dissimulations, pretending always to desire that God might give me the grace to become a Nun.

' Our Mothers, who were full of compassion for the sufferings I declared to them I endured on this account, said to me one day with great kindness, that they advised me to have a Novena said to the Blessed Virgin, and that they had great hopes from the goodness of God for my relief by her prayers and her merits. I promised to do it with joy, declaring myself of their opinion. I was very glad to have this opportunity of displaying to them my submission and my obedience, and that I was doing my utmost to draw down the mercy of God upon me. It was, however, only a pretence, according to my wont. I caused the Novena to be said to the Blessed Virgin, with as little faith and hope as desire of being answered ; and I leave it to be imagined if I was in a disposition to be so. At the close of the Novena I had made no more progress than on the first day. I returned to tell our Mothers that I had accomplished their command but without result, and that I had no more movement to be a Nun than before. I said to them also, with affected sorrow, that I had no more hope, since one could not force the will of God against His very will or obtain His grace by violence. But I begged them very humbly to let me have another Novena said, before the Holy Sacrament at Port Royal ; and I begged urgently the aid of their prayers while it was being said. They promised me willingly and said many things to incline me to receive the grace that they hoped by this means. I had this second Novena performed

with as little devoutness or preparation as the first, neither hoping nor desiring any better result. For I had made the proposal only to please our Mothers and to show them that I had a great respect for their opinion, since I conformed to their first idea of saying the Novena to the Blessed Virgin.

‘But I was overtaken by the goodness of God. On the fourth day of the second Novena it happened, contrary to my expectations, that I fell into thoughts which I had never had and of which my natural humour was incapable. I do not know if it was a turn of my mind, or if it was by permission of God, or by a special ordinance of His supreme goodness towards me. However it may have been, it seems to me that I was no longer myself at that time, for my thoughts were not my own thoughts nor my feelings my own feelings; but a foreign disposition, which was unknown to me, had hold of me, and made me act contrary to my inclinations,—an experience of which I had never had the like.

‘I had gone to the Church of S. Gervais to hear Mass. I withdrew, contrary to my custom, to a place divided off from the rest, in order to see nothing and not to be seen by any one. From the part I was in I looked at this church, which is an ancient building of Paris and one of the biggest and most beautiful naves that can be seen. This antiquity set me thinking of the eternal years. I reflected that all I saw was perishable, fragile and fugitive; which caused me intense sadness, because I greatly loved this present life, and these changes made me see that I was passing like other things. After I had been absorbed for a long time in contemplating this great edifice, I passed from one thought to another, and was carried very far. I said to myself: “These stones, these marbles, these paintings, and all that I see beautiful, will one day end. Everything which is visible endures only for a time. But of all creatures man is the most frail, for those who cut and placed and raised the materials and the stones of this great building are dead long ago, while they remain in place after so many years; and, even since those first men, many generations have passed, and these stones still remain. What? Have senseless things, that have neither movement nor reason, a being more durable than man, who is the most noble amongst all that is under the heaven, and the master of things visible? That cannot be, since reason shows us that they are made for His use and service, and that consequently they are inferior to Him.”

‘Thus I sought for that in man in which he excelled above other creatures; and this set me thinking that there was in him something hidden, which was immortal and destined for

glory, for eternity, and to enjoy even God. All the things which I saw were so many voices that cried to me in their silence that they had an eternal principle, that this principle was God, that this God must be worshipped, loved, and served, and that of all creatures only man was capable of this holy office, and of enjoying this grace : that his supreme happiness upon earth and in heaven was comprised in this adoration, in this love, and in this service which he was obliged to render to his God, principle of his being, since, according to the good or ill use he should make of so many favours, he was destined by God to be eternally happy or unhappy, by a union or separation which should endure for ever.

‘These thoughts gave me a great desire to serve God ; and I thought myself only too happy in that He permitted me to do so. I looked, at that moment, upon the greatest fortunes of the earth as more worthy of contempt than atoms. The pleasures and all that I naturally loved appeared to me sources of pain and constraint which I could no longer endure. After I had been long engaged in these thoughts, I came to myself and I said : “ All these thoughts and these good feelings will pass, and I shall have realized in vain the necessity of serving God. For my madness and the love I have for the world will carry me along like a torrent that I cannot overcome, and my passion will take away even the desire. But it is needful that I set bounds upon the inconstancy of my spirit, and that I select some holy person of a mind and character such that I shall not be afraid of submitting to what he shall tell me as from God. I will look upon such a person as a holy and living rule, that shall keep all my passions and my inclinations under good discipline. I will look upon him as a celestial tongue that shall teach me the orders of the Divine Will towards me. I will regard him as an Angel of God, who shall introduce me into His presence and show me the path of eternity. Then let my aversions rise up against me like mountains to overwhelm me, it matters nothing though I die in so holy a combat : it is this that I should esteem my supreme happiness upon earth, since it would be a means for me to make a sacrifice to God of His enemies and of avenging me for the captivity in which I have been hitherto under the dominion of my passions.”

‘I made these resolutions without thinking that God was giving me our dear Mother to lead me in the path of heaven and to serve as my guardian angel, by making me fulfil my promise. As a consequence of these projects, there came to me some thought and some motion of the Religious Life ; but I did not pay much attention to it and it passed lightly enough.

‘After I had been a long time in these thoughts, I perceived that many hours had passed in this species of sleep, as I may call it, since I was not myself, but a mood that was foreign to me held me engaged against my inclinations and yet without violence. I returned to the place where I lived, and what I had foreseen came to pass. For I found myself in the world again with my former habits stronger than ever; and my madness, my passion, and my blindness, made me love everything I saw with fresh ardour and violence, and in complete oblivion of what had passed. If any thoughts came into my mind I flung them away with all my force and resisted them to the utmost possible. This did not prevent some spark of light, which I violently smothered, appearing from time to time, and in the greatest depths of my darkness. Thoughts of Religion even presented themselves sometimes to my mind, but at a distance, and I did not permit them to come near; on the contrary, I fled from them with as much horror as I should have fled from ministers of justice who were pursuing me with force, to confine me in the black hole of some dark prison and to compel me to atone thus for my crimes all the rest of my life.

‘From the day that I have noted, I felt in myself two contrary wills: the one strong, which I loved and which caused me to behave with my usual licence; the other feeble and languishing, that brought forth only sterile and ineffectual thoughts, for I caused them to die as they were born. But I could not entirely dismiss them, although I made all sorts of efforts to succeed and hinder them from coming. They pursued me in spite of myself, who would not look at them nor permit them for a moment to engage my mind or my thoughts. Thus I fled before God with voluntary perversity, and in pursuance of those evil dispositions which I had cherished from my childhood and which were causing my death, while God followed me by His grace and His mercy, to give me life and to lead me in the path of salvation.

‘I may say that this struggle, which lasted more than ten months, was carried on on my part with so much resistance of God that, were He susceptible of pain, I should have given Him a great deal, and I set myself against His purposes more than all creatures together, because I wished to give no entrance to thoughts that could lead to my salvation.

‘At that time an incident occurred which may show the aversion I had for God, and for His holy service, and for all that had an air of excellence and virtue.

‘I was talking one day to one of my good friends, now a Carmelite. She was a girl of good understanding, for whom

our Mother had an affection and to whom she would gladly have been of service for the love of God ; but she joined the Carmelites in spite of her intention to be at Port Royal. This girl said to me with a warm-heartedness that would have won any other than me : " Now what are we to become ? We have to make up our minds and select a condition for the rest of our lives." I gave her to understand that I also desired to do so.

'She, who was serious-minded, said to me : " For my part I am resolved to serve God, and to make a great effort. For indeed Heaven is well worth one's constraining oneself a little ; and besides, I have sufficient experience of the world to know that God is the one and true friend whom we should set above all things, loving only Him in earth and in heaven." As she saw that I listened with little responsiveness, she continued, saying : " But indeed, what is there worthy of being loved in the world ? And what is there in the world worthy of a reasonable spirit ? " I, who had little relish for this discourse, answered according to my humour, repeating in a contrary sense her very same terms : " But tell me rather, I beg, what is there in the world which is not worthy of love ? What do you find in the world that is not worthy of a reasonable spirit ? And how can one set all one's hopes beyond the grave and bury oneself alive at the age of twenty ? Better enjoy a present good than solace oneself with a hope."

'While so speaking I felt in the bottom of my heart a disposition contrary to my words, but I set myself against this secret movement, which I would neither follow nor recognize. When this good girl heard me speak in this way, she was vexed with me, for she was very fond of me. She wished to see me with right feelings towards God and saw well by my discourse that I wished to remain in the world.

'After these first attempts she was silent for a little, then she began again and said to me : " It is not that I have not had much trouble to make up my mind and subdue myself. But can we do too much for God ? Suppose, if you like, that the extremity of the suffering makes you regard the Religious Life as a species of temporal damnation, we must prepare ourselves for it to escape the eternal. Indeed, believe me, one must follow in this choice faith and reason. Faith obliges us to believe in God, and right reason commands us to love Him and to serve Him. I shall have more trouble than you to conquer myself, for my bond is love of self ; and in whatever place I go, I shall find myself always and I shall have to fight an enemy at home who will wage me constant war, the more fierce and bloody as he will be closer and more inseparable

from me. Nevertheless I am resolved shortly to make this final effort with the grace of God, even though I have reason to fear that the combat will endure all my life. But your bond is not love of self (and it is that which is the most infuriated enemy of the grace of God), but only the love of the world and its amusements. When you have left it, you will not see it again. It is easy not to fear an enemy at a distance, and it is not necessary to prepare for combat when one is in an invincible fortress, as is a Monastery to which the world has no access. Once you have entered you will have no more suffering, and you will be able to serve God with joy."

'She said to me a number of things of the sort to incline me as she wished. But I was untouched by her discourses. She looked at me with sorrow and compassion, but I answered her: "Do what you like. These undertakings last a long time, and require to be thought over more than once. One has too much leisure for repentance if one has executed them in haste. I beg you to think it over seriously." As I spoke, I was thoroughly determined to resist and never to be a Nun. This did not prevent my entering a Convent three months before she did; that is, I think, two months after she had held me this discourse.

'However, I still continued my visits to Port Royal with the usual feints and pretences, which lasted more than six months. But, as I began to grow tired of them, I tried to beat a gradual retreat. For I wanted to do it with honour and a good grace, in some way that would not be uncivil. For this reason I manifested more regard for the Religious state than before, and I pretended to endure my evil disposition with pain and sorrow. As I was thinking of withdrawing, an opportunity proffered itself that seemed to me very favourable to my purpose. It was, that our Mother sent to another Monastery the Nun whom I saw oftenest and who showed me most affection and kindness. I wished to say good-bye to her, thinking that, when she was gone, I would not return any more to Port Royal, and that in this way I would withdraw; but God made me enter that very same day, as I am about to relate.

'The Nun, whom I loved and to whom I was greatly indebted on account of her kindness towards me, had left before I reached Port Royal to say good-bye to her; I was told so on entering the Monastery. This information made me respond that I had nothing more to do at Port Royal, since she was no longer there. But I was told that our Mother Marie Angélique wished to speak to me. This gave me a secret dread, for I knew her force of mind. It seems that I anticipated what

was about to happen, for I tried to leave without speaking to her ; and there was some secret instinct hidden in myself that made me afraid of meeting her, Nevertheless I dared not manifest my unwillingness more openly. I was escorted accordingly to the Parlour where our Mother awaited me.

‘ When I had greeted her, she said to me in a rather strong voice, “ Now, what are you going to do ? Will you always throw away the time that God gives you for your salvation ? ” I made answer, trembling, that I desired to *obey* her. “ In what ? ” she said. “ *In whatever you wish, my Mother,* ” I answered. “ That is well said,” she went on : “ but let us come to actions. Will you be a Nun ? ” “ *No, no, my Mother ; it is impossible for me to live shut up between four walls ; the very thought gives me horror ; I cannot endure it.* ” “ And you wish whatever I wish ! ” said our Mother, “ but on condition that I wish only what you wish yourself. I tell you from God that you are being lost by thus following your inclinations, which in the end will render you unhappy in this world and the next. I know the life that girls lead in the world. You must be pledged one way or the other, in order to settle your mind.”

‘ At these words I conceived a genuine respect for her person, and for all that she said to me ; and I, who had never had faith or submission towards God Himself, began to see Him in her, and her words made a great impression on my mind, I listened with great attention, but with so troubled a mind and with such trembling in my whole body, that I could no longer speak without stammering ; and I believe I could not be understood, as well from the failure of my voice as from the disconnectedness of my speech ; for I had no longer the power of saying or of thinking anything to the point, because my mind was a frightful darkness.

‘ Seeing me in this condition, our Mother said to me : “ Go before the Holy Sacrament, and abandon yourself to the will of God for your whole life, and for all that He shall be pleased to ordain you for time and for eternity. Reflect in His presence that you are His and not your own, that you are the work of His hands, and that you are committing sacrilege by hindering the working of His holy will upon you.” She then made a number of Sisters go with her before the Holy Sacrament, to ask mercy from God for me, and for my part I went also, as she had commanded me, but in trouble of mind, and with trembling of body and such extreme weakness that I could no longer support myself nor find the way to the Church.

‘ When I was before the Altar, I may say with truth that

I flung myself on the ground like a person half fainting, having no longer free use of my reason, nor any power of controlling my mind. There was nobody in the Church, which was very fortunate for me; for, had any persons seen me, they would certainly have taken me for some one out of her mind, and I have no doubt the more charitable would have shown me some kind attention with this idea, seeing my actions, which were so extraordinary that they showed the trouble of my mind. In this state I spoke to God without knowing what I was saying; for as for thinking of what our Mother had said to me, that was impossible. I recalled afterwards some words uttered without order or sense, but expressing very well the disposition I was in at the moment. I said trembling: "My God, give me grace to do my will all my life, and not yours. No, my God, I never will do yours." I spoke thus, in this disorder, a quantity of things which I no longer remember, thinking I was saying words of submission and of resignation to the sacred commands of the Divine Will upon me. In this state I was as those who are agitated by strong fever. My tongue was dry as wood and stuck to my palate, so that I could not articulate. But nothing that I can say will express it; those who have had a similar experience will understand it better than I can tell it.

'After I had been for some time before the Holy Sacrament in this disorder of thought, I returned to the Parlour to find our Mother, who awaited me. She began by saying to me: "This is the moment that you must enter. God wills you to be a Nun." When I heard her speak in this manner, all my anguish was redoubled. I answered her: "*My Mother, it is impossible.*" "Why?" she said. "*My Mother, I have given my word to some people who are waiting for me.*" She replied: "That is the answer of a child. What? there are people waiting for you. Is that enough to make you lose the moment that God has set apart from all eternity to make you enter upon the way of your salvation? Now one must speak more seriously. God wills you to be a Nun." I was then upright before the grille, holding the bars with both my hands to support me, for I could do no more. Our Mother said to me: "*You must enter.*"

'She has told me several times since that she felt herself strangely impelled to speak thus to me, a thing at which she could not sufficiently wonder, for she had never had a like movement for anybody, and that it seemed to her as if some great misfortune must fall upon me were I to return thence. But the greatest which awaited me lay in the resolution I had taken never again to come to Port Royal; for me a misfortune

greater than all the ills of the world, because my salvation is linked to my calling. And I know by my own experience that I could not be in a state of salvation while dwelling in the world.

‘When our Mother said to me, *You must enter*, it seemed to me that God Himself was speaking to me ; which made me answer with as much respect as grief and repugnance : “ *What, my Mother, must I then be a Nun ?* ” She answered, “ You must ; God wills it.” I replied, “ *Then I must, my Mother.* ” As I pronounced these words, I believe that I suffered as much as though I had experienced the pains of death ; for it seemed that my soul was sundered from my body ; and God alone knows that I have no words to express myself on this matter. I remember that I held the grille with both hands, and that distress and repugnance made me strike my head several times quite roughly against the bars, without feeling the pain, because I was taken up with a pain to which I was more alive ; and I may say that, at that moment, I was the field of the struggle between grace and nature, and that all the blows fell upon me. Our Mother said to me : “ Go to the door of the cloister of the Monastery, I will receive you there.”

‘At these words my terror was redoubled, and, in the state I was in of apprehension, I said to her, in order to avoid obeying her so far as I could : “ My Mother, you do not know me. I have views contrary to the Religious Life. I have failings which you do not know,” and a number of similar things, in order to turn her aside and make her say I was unfit to be a Nun. She listened to me without changing her will, for she saw clearly the movement that made me speak thus. On the contrary she said to me : “ That is what I ask of you, for they will be a ground of deep humiliation for you.” She said to me no longer, as before, “ *Do you desire it ?* ” but, with an air not to be gainsaid, “ *I desire you to go to the door.* ” And she added : “ No more deliberating ; go to the door, I am going to receive you.” I had to obey this time. But I leave it to be imagined what distress, what dread, what bewilderment was in my mind, and what pains and anguish I suffered. I am convinced no one can tell without experience.

‘I went in this condition to the door of the Monastery, where our Mother awaited me. I was as a criminal led to torture, who can think of nothing but death, except that the criminal dreads death because he loves life, while I had for sole consolation the thought of a speedy death, to be delivered from the life I was about to embrace, which was more hateful to me than death itself. For I thought that the austerity

and observance of the cloister, together with all my aversion, would make me die in two or three years ; and had I thought I should live the twenty-three years that have passed since I became a Nun, I never should have entered, and I should not have made up my mind to it, even though our Mother told me it was the will of God ; for I had not the feeling of God strong enough to rule my reason made feeble by pain. Nevertheless I said to myself : " If I am happy enough after my admission to have a spark of faith, it will dissipate the gloom of my spirit ; and when I am overwhelmed by the weight of my misery and my repugnance, or oppressed on all sides, I will fling myself at the foot of the Altar, and I will say to God with my whole heart : *God of my soul, Thou Who hast created me, desert me not. I do not ask to be relieved, but that Thou wilt give me grace to suffer for Thy glory according to the ordinance of Thy holy will.* With this thought that I am looked upon by God, it seems to me I shall be invincible, and that I shall esteem myself only too happy to suffer in this manner."

'I went to the door with these thoughts, which did not at the time give me any comfort. On the contrary, at the moment I am describing there seemed to be about me a legion of devils, a great number of passions in my body and in the spirit a dreadful tempest. Our Mother opened the door of the cloister, but seeing that I did not proceed to enter, she took me by the hand. Then I flung myself at her feet, bursting into tears. She raised me and embraced me with affection, manifesting great joy. The first thing I said was : "*My Mother, I shall repent having entered.*" She answered me with a smile : " I am pledge that you will never repent, on the contrary you will bless God for it all your life." These words have not ever left my mind, because they have proved very true ; for the door was barely closed when my mind became more calm than it had before been agitated ; and this troop of passions and of demons, that had oppressed me with such violence, remained outside, God not permitting them to follow me, because my strength was exhausted and I could no longer bear them. My spirit was at rest, and I had no other pain than the fear lest the former ones should return. I was happy in the present but I feared the future ; for I could not believe that the change I felt in myself was genuine, or that it could last, so that I had the quite new pain of dreading what might happen.

I entered, thus happily constrained, on the first of May in the year 1630, my birthday and the day of my baptism. I was twenty-two years old that day ; and I had always said

that at that age I would become a Nun, but in jest and thinking of anything rather than of speaking the truth ; for when, in company, I was accused of loving the world, I used to answer laughing and thinking I was making fun of myself : " Wait a little till I am twenty-two, when I will desert you and turn Nun, but until then I mean to have a good time. Do not pity me. I will do penance for it." I did not know what I was saying ; but God made me accomplish it by His grace, together with the Vow I had made at the age of fifteen, in which I had promised God I would be a Nun, if He would restore to health my mother, who was nearly dying ; for the fear I had of losing her would have made me promise much more, had it been in my power. But when she was cured, I did not think any more of my Vow, and I had not any wish to accomplish and acquit it. Thus God alone by His goodness drew a good result from an evil cause, and made true a speech pronounced lightly and set forth as a lie, making me a Nun at the moment I believed myself farthest from it, since I was thinking only of remaining in the world. This it is which shows me clearly that God was working through our very dear Mother, when she forced me to enter against my will and my reason, while I was making every kind of effort to leave her, with the resolution never again to return to Port Royal.

'When I had entered, my mind became happy as I have said. My feelings were at rest and all my former agitations were calmed. But the previous conflict had made such an impression on my body, that I fell very ill the following night. This gave great trouble to our Mother, for, since the persons of the world, who came to ask for me, could not speak with me, they took occasion to say all sorts of things beside the mark, because none of my acquaintance had ever thought I should be a Nun. Some attributed it to one cause, some to another ; each according to their taste. But the sole cause was the goodness of God, and His sole mercy, which willed to show me so many favours at the time when I set myself with all my force against the effects of His holy will upon me. My illness lasted six weeks with considerable violence and suffering, a thing which was a happiness rather than distress to me, because the repose of my mind gave me great contentment, although I was always in fear lest the former distress should return and overwhelm me. Our Mother showed me the kindness of coming often to see me during this illness, to learn what state I was in.

'Although her kindness made her take great part in the malady I was suffering, and see that I had the necessary

remedies, she had another care, which was to sustain my spirit under the weakness she had reason to dread, because she had experienced what I could do by myself, and she feared lest there should rise in my mind some storm which should make me lose courage. She said to me with her customary benevolence and her kindness : " How do you feel with us ? have you as much dread of being a Nun as formerly ? I think you cannot say you do not wish it and that God does not leave you free in this matter, that this choice is not in your power, and that you can do nothing else than follow the path that is shown you. You have been with us several days and the time has passed without your feeling it. All your life will pass in the same way, because God sustains you, and will sustain you to the end of your life, even though you do not feel it ; which He does by a great compassion for you, for you are so inclined to appropriate everything to yourself that you would make yourself the owner of His very gifts. He wills that you should live and act without knowledge, in dependence upon His divine will for you, without reasoning about everything as you do. You have an evil tendency which He has anticipated by His goodness. It is that you measure everything according to the reach and the power of the human mind ; and you believe that a person with a strong mind is capable of succeeding in all that he undertakes. This tendency would be a great obstacle in the estate to which God calls you and would be greatly to the prejudice of your perfection. But, by His grace, He has so annihilated and destroyed in you this would-be strength, that you are constrained to acknowledge and confess that you are but weakness, and can expect of yourself only inconstancy and confusion. It is the way of God for you ; hope for no other."

" I may say here, that it seems she had the spirit of prophecy ; for I have spent twenty-three years, which have passed since I became a Nun, in the state she predicted, without change of disposition ; and that has not prevented me from being perfectly happy, although my life has passed in a succession of actions wholly contrary to my tastes and my former habits, God sustaining me by His goodness and by His grace with the same force and violence as when He made me leave the world to enter into Religion. ..

" I began to leave my room after my illness in Holy Week. During these holy days the austerities and customary penitences of the Community are redoubled. Our Mother's kindness made her dread my weakness on this occasion, for she strongly suspected I should be startled at seeing disciplines received in public, and a number of other penances beyond

my capacity.¹ For this reason she suppressed a great part, and arranged so that the few she permitted should not come to my knowledge. A Sister was provided to escort me to the places, and at the hours, where she knew I should see nothing that should distress me. But all her care could not prevent her disclosing to me herself what she wished to hide. One day, on opening a door, she saw that the discipline was being given to a Sister and that a number of other penances were being done before the Community. She was taken by surprise, and reclosing the door, made a pretext for not entering, without letting me see there was anything secret. But I had seen what was going on, and I was very much dismayed. This accident made me ask to speak to our Mother, that she might tell me what she thought well to make me capable of these holy actions.

Our Mother spoke to me with her customary kindness, and said to me, "You seem very terrified. Tell me what troubles you; you may do so without fear. Tell me, I beg you, freely." I answered her that I implored her to do me the favour not to hide from me any of the things I should have to do when I was a Nun, because I feared lest there should be a number of secret austerities which I should not be able to observe; that it was better to show me them at the very beginning of my entrance than to wait longer; and that I wished to take steps and consider whether I could be a Nun. Finally I testified to her my aversion for these sorts of penance, and above all for disciplines taken before others. I told her that I did not believe one was pledged to that, since the Gospel did not ordain it. Our Mother answered me that I need not distress myself, and that I should never do such penance unless I requested, because these kinds of penance were voluntary, that they were never imposed, and that she had refused more than fifty in consideration of me. She added that, when I became a Nun, God would require of me only the practice of the Rule of S. Benedict, that it would be upon that He would examine me when He judged me, and that to have kept it faithfully would suffice for my justification in His presence.

I was satisfied with what our Mother had said, not perceiving that it was in aid and accommodation to my weakness that she spoke thus, by excess of goodness and kindness. I was quite resolved not to ask for external penances, saying that such was not God's way for me, since He had given me

¹ The time, it must be remembered, was that of the direction of the Bishop of Langres.

so much aversion for them, and consequently I felt certain I never in all my life should perform any. I was in this manner at rest, honouring the penances and those who performed them ; but I had no desire to imitate them. From that day nothing was hidden from me, and I had no more alarm on seeing the austerities and the penances that were performed in great number in the Community throughout the remainder of Lent. I spent the three first months of my entrance in the Monastery without keeping the Observances, thus giving occasion to our Mother and our Sisters for the exercise of charity and patience ; but they hoped that, when I was pledged, I should become more punctual and more regular.

Our Mother gave me the Habit at the end of the three months of my entrance ; and I was the last to receive this favour at her hands, before she laid down the charge of Abbess. When I found myself pledged, I began to look upon my duties as a sacred tie and happy obligation which bound me to God and to the Observances, and which took from me all power of disposing of myself for the remainder of my life ; which made me love obedience solely, as my guide and my only hope. For this was the greatest happiness I had in Religion, to know that I was subject to obedience, and that it was the rule of all my actions. It seemed to me that God obliged me more than any one else to practise this virtue, on account of the darkness of my mind. For this reason I kept it always before me in my smallest actions, and I measured them by the rules of obedience.

“ When our Mother, or the Mistress of Novices, ordered something, I kept it in the most exact manner that I possibly could. For I feared exceedingly to relax, and I said to myself : “ If I let myself commit voluntary faults through negligence, God will abandon me and leave me to myself ; then at length I shall be given in prey to my own passions, and overwhelmed under the burden of my weakness and my corruption, which will make me flee from obedience and observances. Thus I shall fall from one irregularity into another greater, and this will lead me to an abyss of evil, which will make me wretched in this world, and will anticipate the eternal damnation which will be inevitable in the next.” All these thoughts redoubled the love I had for obedience, which I looked upon as the sole means given me by God on earth to attain to heaven. This made me sometimes say, that if the Religious state could be without obedience, it would be a hell. For from the moment that I began to obey our Mother, by entering to become a Nun, it seemed to me that I could hope nothing from God save

through this holy virtue, which I revered as the key of heaven.

‘A few days after I took the Habit, our Mother laid down her charge and gave up her Abbey . . .’¹

‘The year of my Novitiate passed without my speaking to our dear Mother, because, being no longer in charge, she spoke to no one. When I was received in the Chapter for my Profession, I asked leave to see her. For I looked upon her always as my true Mother, who had given me birth in Jesus Christ, to make me live to God alone in holy Religion. Permission was granted, and she gave me an hour of her time. When I was with her, I said to her : *What ? my Mother, must I then be a Nun ?* Not but what I desired it with all my heart ; but I looked back at my former disposition, which made me still fear my weakness in so great a pledge ; and I wanted to be assured of the will of God by our Mother, as I had been in respect of my entrance into Religion. This is what made me speak in this way. Our Mother said a number of things to prepare me for my Profession. She confirmed me in my resolution, and took from me the doubts I had as to whether it were the will of God for me. She prepared me for the temptations which might occur, and said to me what she thought suitable to fortify me against the Devil. This interview was of some length and very happy for me. In brief, I made my Profession on her surety, confiding in the mercy of God from Whom I awaited the success of an undertaking so important for me ; no longer doubting that it was the will of God since I did it by submission, in obedience to our dear Mother whom I knew to be His faithful servant, and to whom I am indebted for all the favours I have received from God.

‘By all that I have just related, it may be observed that God sometimes grants requests made to Him without faith, even impiously and without the wish to be heard, as was mine when I said : *If there be a God, let Him make me a Nun, and I will believe in Him, for I do not wish for any other or greater miracle.* I asked what I did not wish to obtain, and that which I believed to be impossible. I asked it in malice, and only to convince and assure myself that my impiety was justified ; and God answered me so as to show me the depths of His mercy, in bestowing so many favours upon one who merited complete destruction, and doing it in a manner more wonderful than I had asked ; for I thought it impossible

¹ v. *ante*, pp. 152-3.

that I should become a Nun, without my will first changing, and without loving forthwith that which I previously abhorred. But God, Who had no need of my will to dispose of me in accordance with His purposes, brought me to Religion with the like aversion, against my feelings and my reason, that I might perceive it was an effect of His grace, of His mercy, and of His absolute power.

‘They who learn how God performed a miracle of grace and goodness in making me a Nun, in subjecting my will by a strong though gentle violence, will think that the course of my life must have been also a continual miracle of fidelity, of gratitude and of love towards Him, to render Him an action of grace corresponding to the greatness of His mercy. But His goodness, which did not call me to the Religious Life in order to raise me to great perfection, drew me there only to withdraw me from the damnation which was inevitable had death overtaken me in the world.

‘If the order of God permit souls, who are in heaven, to feel gratitude towards the holy persons who have had the kindness to assist them and to conduct them upon earth for love of Him, and if He show me mercy, I shall look upon our very dear Mother as the secondary cause of my salvation. And it seems to me that her blessedness will increase mine, since mine will be a result of hers, although she be very exalted according to her desert, and I only in the lowest place, having no other merits than the mercy and the goodness of God, by which I hope this grace in heaven.’

CHAPTER XII

The Mère Angélique goes to the *Institut du S. Sacrement*.—She comes under the direction of Saint-Cyran.—Ill-will and jealousy aroused by the new foundation.—Angélique returns to the Convent of Port Royal.

FOR three years Angélique cultivated, under the trying rule of the nuns from Tard, the self-effacing virtues of a simple nun. One or two letters to her brother d'Andilly the year after her resignation, written apparently when she had charge of the children, show, better than any reports from the nuns, her assured serenity of soul.

The plague was that year (1631), in Paris, on the increase when she writes at the end of September, though colder weather gave hopes of improvement. 'However that may be, we are God's, and, since He does not will that we should go to the country, He will preserve us, if it please Him, in town; if not, it is just as good to die this year as the next.'¹

She writes on the birth of his fifth daughter,—three already were at Port Royal, the two elder in the novitiate, and her namesake Angélique, our often-cited Mère Angélique de S. Jean, among the children under her charge:—

'But these five daughters, do they not turn your hair grey? It must not be so, my very dear brother. God is their Father, your only care must be to seek His kingdom and His justice; and, that being so, rest assured that all things will be given you. . . . Angélique says that she wants very much to see her new sister, but that she would rather deprive herself of that pleasure than go to Andilly. And, as I said to her they were five, she said to me: *But you are counting those who are in Religion; you must not, for we do not belong any more to the world.* She said this so resolutely and so gaily that it seemed as though she were on the eve of her Profession.'²

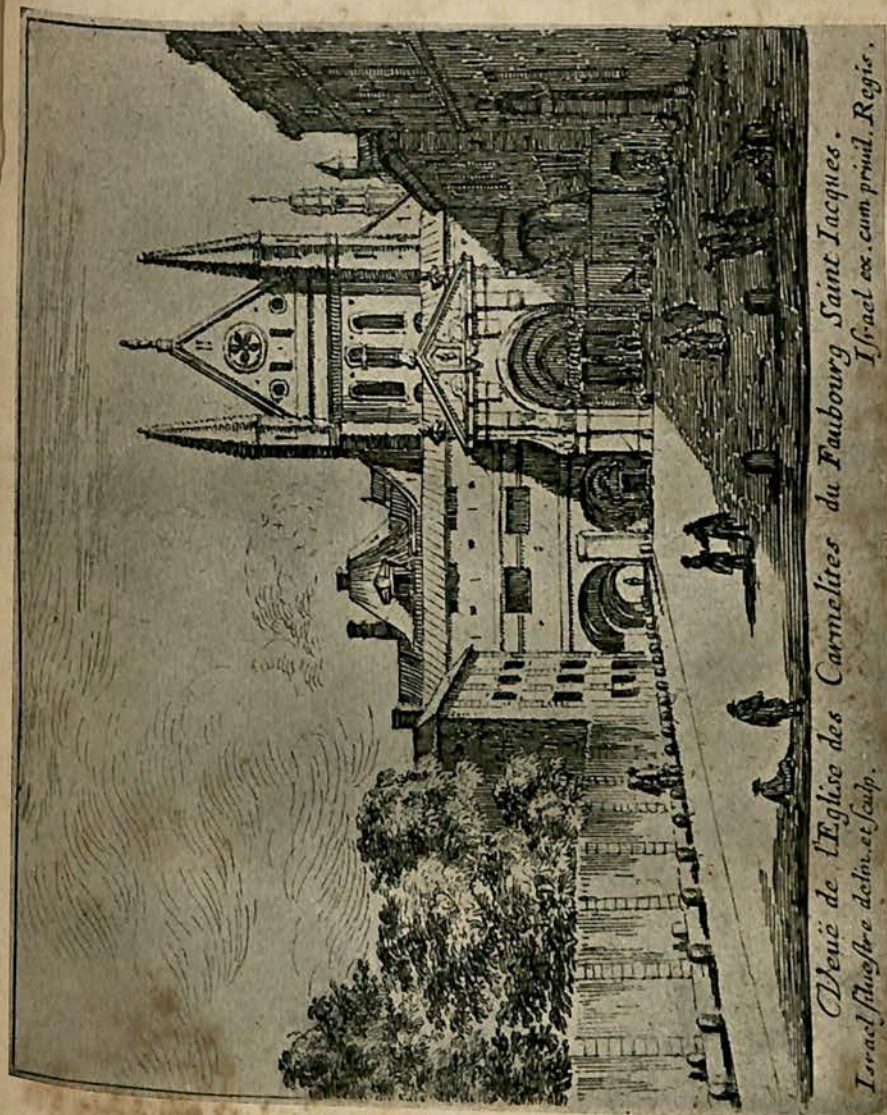
¹ *Lettres de la Révérende Mère Marie-Angélique Arnauld* . . . , vol. i, p. 36.

² *Ib.*, p. 37.

(The child was then about seven ; she did not pass to her calling with quite such triumphal ease, but, about the age of twelve, would seem to have been troubled with doubts. 'Her strong intelligence,' we learn from later letters, 'went near to ruining her.')

After three years, Angélique was called upon again to take the headship, not at Port Royal but at the new Institute, though now against the wishes of the Bishop. Even before losing his ascendancy over her mind, he had recognized that she was not of the stuff he required. Her ardour did not take the mystic turn agreeable to him and her spirit of simplicity was not apt to attract the world he wished to please. The Sister Geneviève, as Angélique de S. Jean so unsparingly relates, was an instrument more pliant and responsive, and, Abbess now at Port Royal, was amenable to the influence of the ex-Abbess of Tard. He cast about for a Superior other than Angélique, who had been named in the project submitted to the Pope, for his new House. He thought of Agnès, with her more mystic tendency, and had this end in view when he sent her, for training, to Tard. But from her his thoughts had turned to a Carmelite Sister, Sub-Prioress of the *Petit Couvent*—as a smaller House of the Carmelites was called, in contradistinction to their other great convent. With this Sister the Bishop had much intercourse, lodging hard by for the purpose. He succeeded in detaching her affections from her own Order, but the outcome was only that the Superior's jealousy was aroused, the nun relegated to seclusion, and the Bishop forbidden the parlour. The incident was rife in seeds of discord. The jealousy of the Carmelites was stirred shortly after against the whole proposed scheme, and not without reason. The *Maison du S. Sacrement* threatened to encroach on their prerogative of Court favour ; it had become now its promoter's set purpose to attract those women of the Court of whom the Carmelites had hitherto had a monopoly. Nor were his methods of attraction very different.

The Bishop's religious fervour had, as already said, affinity with the devotion of the Carmelites, captivating the imagination by excessive austerities while admitting at the same time much that gratified and exalted the senses, rather than



*Deuë de l'Eglise des Carmelites du Faubourg Saint Jacques.
Israel ex. cum priud. Regis.*

THE CHURCH OF THE CARMELITES IN THE FAUBOURG S. JACQUES, PARIS
From engraving by Israel Silvestre

with the Port Royal cult of uniform simplicity and unobtrusive silent prayer and industry. Angélique herself had formed, at his desire, a friendship with the Carmelite Mère Magdeleine ; the two Abbesses had sympathized in their desire to escape the jurisdiction of monks ; from the Carmelites Angélique had adopted also a detail of conventual dress. She was much admired by them, and when, on bringing her community from Port Royal, she passed a day there, they told her she closely resembled S. Theresa, even to the detail of identical warts. But for her part, though with genuine esteem for the Mère Magdeleine and for the Carmelites' fasting and austerities, she criticized them in precisely those points which the Bishop of Langres would have had copied ; for the great adornment of their convent, their valuable pictures—'the palace of the Luxembourg itself with all its pictures was less magnificent than their Monastery'—, the incongruity of their renowned hermitages, 'called by the names of hermits who had lived truly in caverns and deserts,' while these were 'grottoes resplendent with precious things, worthier of princes than of hermits.'¹ These nuns in Paris, she felt, had sadly declined from the spirit of their first foundress, S. Theresa.

At this present juncture Angélique herself was called upon to rule over a House whose constitutions and general aims were a grave decline from the ideal she had nurtured at Port Royal. The Archbishop would sanction no other head in the new *Maison du S. Sacrement* ; least of all would he accept the final choice of the Bishop of Langres, the ex-Abbess namely of Tard. Three months later he compelled the nuns from Tard, intruders into his diocese, to return from Port Royal to their own monastery.

Narrative of the Mère Angélique (continued)

'During this time'—the three years subsequent to her resignation—'we were suing for Letters Patent from the King for the establishment of the *Maison du S. Sacrement*, but great difficulties arose, many persons having an interest that this Institute should not be created. At length God

¹ *Entretiens . . . avec M. le Maître, Mémoires pour servir . . .*, vol. ii, p. 353-4.

granted that the King, being taken very ill at Lyons, should be cured, it was believed, by the very Holy Sacrament which he received in Viaticum. The Keeper of the Seals (de Marillac), who had never been willing to ratify these Letters, had a movement of God, in gratitude for the health of the King, to draw up very advantageous ones, the King granting this grace in gratitude for his cure, which he attributed to the Holy Sacrament.

‘After this happy success, M. the Archbishop of Paris was approached, but there seemed no likelihood of obtaining his consent ; because he was offended that two other Prelates (M. the Archbishop of Sens, and M. the Bishop of Langres) should be associated with him in the Superiority of this Monastery. However, after great beseeching on the part of Mme de Longueville, he permitted me to see a House and that it should be bought ; and immediately they set to work to turn it into a Monastery, as well as could be. It was in the district of the Louvre, the noisiest in Paris, surrounded by streets and big houses, without any possibility of enlarging it except at immense outlay. But the neighbourhood of the Court was desired, in order to attract women of rank and of the Court.

‘For I am compelled to say it. It came to pass, by a secret judgement of God, that this Bishop, who, when we first saw him, breathed only God, and appeared quite dead to the world, and who had cast his eyes at first upon our House, all retired as it was and apart from the world, afterwards believed that the new House could not prosper unless by making many friends and having Nuns of rank and wealth. He had the Constitutions made, in which he laid down truly many good and holy rules, but there were others which were not so. He desired that the dress should be beautiful and august, so he said, of beautiful white serge, a red scapulary of beautiful scarlet, fine linen ; that the church should be magnificent, and everything in great elegance and daintiness ; that Matins should be said in the evening at eight o’clock ; and that all should be so mild and so agreeable as not to alarm the women of the Court ; further, that the Sisters should be refined and courteous, and attractive in their devotion.

‘As regards enclosure, he desired it very strict, with all the observances which did not offend against good breeding. And since I was not spiritual enough to unravel all that, he did not want me to be Superior, although I was named in the Bull ; but he wanted it to be the Abbess who had resigned ’ (from Dijon) ‘and who had come from the Monastery he had reformed. But, and I do not know why, he could not ever

obtain this from M. the Archbishop of Paris, although I begged it of him greatly and with all my heart, even against my heart. For it is true that I had a great desire to go thither, though not in order to be Superior.

‘M. of Paris was firm against all our solicitations, and did not wish even that this Nun should come with me to the House. At length, by what I must call a happy chance, for the good that God gave me through this means, he yielded, and allowed us to go thither on the 8th of May, 1633.’

Angélique did not, however, enter unhampered upon her new duties. The Bishop of Langres sent with her a protégée of his, Mlle de Chamesson by name,—a girl left an orphan, who fancied she might find her sphere in a convent, while the Bishop thought her breeding and polish serviceable to his ends. This girl, as yet not even a nun, had a position of undefined authority in the House. Her arrogance and ill-humour was a new exercise, the nuns do not fail to record,¹ of our Mother’s patience and forbearance; her wounded vanity was the hinge upon which, in the sequel, events turned.

In this new House, with outer things against her, Angélique strove still to foster, by precept and example, the old ideal in her nuns. As regards all externals she remained, true to her vow of obedience, the passive instrument of the Director’s wishes. No act of hers, but a happy chance,—the hand of providence, as she saw it,—transferred her allegiance, legitimately, from that Bishop to the Abbé de Saint-Cyran. Then at length she rested in obedience, finding in the outer guide assurance of her own aims.

The acquaintance with Saint-Cyran had already begun, though to no purpose, at Port Royal des Champs.

Narrative of the Mère Angélique (continued)

‘It must be known that, before we had come to Paris, we had the advantage of seeing at the *Maison des Champs* M. l’Abbé de Saint-Cyran, who did my brother the honour of loving him. As he knew my mother fairly well, he chanced to be visiting her when I begged her to bring carriages to escort the Sisters

¹ Cf. *Relation de la conduite de la Mère Angélique dans la première Maison du S. Sacrement . . . Par la Mère Magdeleine de Sainte Agnès de Ligni, Mémoires pour servir . . .*, vol. i, p. 509 seq.

of Maubuisson to our Monastery in 1623. My mother having told him the reasons for transferring these Sisters, he was so pleased with the charity he thought we were showing, that he took the trouble to write and thank me, as though he had been the Father of all these Nuns (*Filles*); and from that moment God gave him kindness towards me.

‘He left soon after with M. the Bishop of Aire (M. Bouthillier), who begged him, as his intimate friend, to assist him in his cure, and he remained there up to the death of this good Bishop (1625). On his way back to Paris, he passed by our House in the country. In one of the visits which he paid us on Ascension Eve, he did me the honour of conversing with me with great kindness, and he said admirable things about this great mystery. It happened that, speaking to me, he said a word which touched me greatly: namely, that he had seen many Abbesses reform their Monasteries, but that he had seen few reform their persons. I knew myself to be of this majority, although God had given me the grace to greatly desire that I might be one of the smaller number.

‘I revered thenceforth this holy man, as being very learned, but I was not so happy as to recognize his saintliness to the full, or to enjoy then the happiness that God seemed to offer me, of taking direction from him. He gave me also no opening, a thing which he never did, inquiring into nothing, and replying to precisely that alone which was asked him. And for the rest, he spoke of general matters of devotion, with an admirable elevation of mind; in such a manner that one saw clearly that his words sprang from the depth of his heart rather than of his mind.

‘When I was in Paris he continued to come and see us, more for my mother, whom he knew better, than for me. She took his advice as to her vocation. He confessed her when she made her Profession, and she spoke to him with great trust. As for me, I respected him greatly, and begged him to come and see me at the time I was in great distress, no longer knowing what to do for our subsistence. I told him only very superficially the cause of my trouble; and, without asking anything further, he consoled me with words all full of faith and of charity.

‘Little by little I learned to know him better; but I did not venture to engage myself with him, because I was pledged elsewhere. I did not fail to perceive many things which did not follow the first lights I had seen in him who directed me (M. de Langres), nor those it had pleased God to give me from the moment He inspired me with the impulse to serve Him.

‘But I was in terrible perplexity on account of this new

Institute, the foundations of which were laid by the purchase of a House costing twenty-nine thousand *livres*, and he who directed me was Superior. At length God of His goodness willed that this Bishop, making acquaintancè with M. de Saint-Cyran on occasion of some affair of Church and Clergy, formed a particular friendship with him; and, with more frequent intercourse, his esteem of his wisdom and great ability ever increased. And as he was persecuted on account of the new Institute by sundry eminent and devout persons, and for sundry matters known to God, he thought he had need of M. de Saint-Cyran to defend his honour; and he did not deceive himself, as the sequel shows.

‘He told me one day, after much praise of M. de Saint-Cyran, that I should show him the Constitutions of the *Maison du S. Sacrement*. That surprised me greatly, although indeed it gave me much joy. I said that I begged him to think it well over first, because I knew M. de Saint-Cyran, who would never ask to see them if they were not shown to him, and would not fail, for all that, to serve him and the Institute in all he could; but that, if they were shown him, and that in order to make him give his opinion, he would do it frankly and feel it his duty; and I feared it might bring about some coolness between them, their views perhaps not agreeing. To which he replied: *Do not be afraid, show them him. I wish him to be absolute master of them.*

‘I immediately begged M. de Saint-Cyran to come and see us, and prayed him on the part of the Bishop to see these Constitutions, and to make all the corrections he pleased. He took them, examined them, and out of respect for this Bishop he changed very little, although there was much not to his mind. One thing he could not endure, finding it contrary to the Order of the Church, and this was that the Sisters should bury one another without Priests. I told the Bishop. This offended him a little, and he alleged me grounds in favour of the ceremony. Nevertheless he bade me remove the clause, and continued to be very much attached to M. de Saint-Cyran; so much so that he begged him urgently to have a care of us and help us in our new establishment, where we were four Professed Nuns from here, a Lay Sister who had come from the Monastery of Tard which he had reformed, four Postulants of the Choir and one Lay Sister. M. de Saint-Cyran obeyed him with great fidelity, taking such care of us, that every day he wrote to me as to the holy dispositions we ought to be in to start an Institute and be one of the foundation stones of a House of God in the Church.

‘I began then to know better than I had hitherto, that he

was as spiritual and saintly as he was learned. The Bishop was enchanted at the pains he took with us, and exhorted us to testify our gratitude well.

'We were not long in repose ; for incontinently the affair of the *Chapelet* took place, which I will not write about here because it has been done already.¹ I will say only, that I sent it to him' (viz., the work in question to M. de Saint-Cyran) 'by command of the Bishop, one day when it was already late, after I had received it, not having any copy in the *Maison du S. Sacrement*. He set himself to examine it then and there with great care, and wrote to me that same evening at eight o'clock, that, having read and examined it without any prejudice, ready to condemn it if it deserved, as to approve it if it were good, he could assure me that it contained nothing contrary to the Catholic truth, or that could not be very well maintained, and that he hastened to tell me so in order to relieve me of anxiety.

'The Bishop was extremely gratified that he supported him in this persecution, which was very unjust, the work not being bad in itself ; and, even had it been, the Bishop was not the author as he was said to be. It is true that he had seen and approved it, but so too had he² who had stirred up this persecution, and with much more warmth and zeal. God permitted it so to be, and turned it to His glory, as He does with all our ills.

'M. the Archbishop, who was already dissatisfied because the Bishop who directed us was conjoined with him in the Superiority of this Monastery, although he had allowed us to enter the House, preserved always some feeling of annoyance ; and, being again irritated by certain persons, he required absolutely that the Mother Jeanne, who was Prioress of Port Royal, should return thence with four other Nuns who had come with her' (back, i.e., to Dijon). 'In addition, the persecution of the *Chapelet* was so great, that the Court took part in it, and we were run down as visionary heretics ; and some went so far as to accuse us of sorcery.'

This affair of the *Chapelet*³ had as cause the jealousy of a Bishop ; the innocent occasion was the Mother Agnès.

¹ A narrative of the events of this time, by Mme le Maître, was written apparently as early as 1636, for the purpose of defence against calumny. v. *Mémoires pour servir . . .*, vol. i, p. 419 seq.

² The Bishop of Sens.

³ v. *Relation de l'origine et de la querelle du Chapelet Secret du très saint Sacrement. Par la Mère Angélique de S. Jean Arnauld, Mémoires pour servir . . .*, vol. i, p. 456 seq.

The Superiority of this House of the Holy Sacrament was, as narrated, divided between three prelates; the Archbishop of Paris, the Archbishop of Sens, and the Bishop of Langres. The Archbishop of Paris, resenting the equality with him of two strange prelates, used his power as diocesan to hamper the establishment until his sole, or at least supreme, authority should be recognized. The Archbishop of Sens for his part, finding himself quite overshadowed by the Bishop of Langres and jealous both for himself and on behalf of the Carmelites, with whom he was in close union, practically dropped his connexion with the new House and, having no such legal expedients as the Archbishop of Paris, took opportunity for more personal attack. He raised a stir over a small devotional treatise, the *Chapelet Secret*, which, he declared, embodied the teaching of the Bishop of Langres and the tendencies of this House, and which he caused to be examined and censured by eight doctors of Sorbonne, as dangerous and heretical.

The *Chapelet Secret* dated back to the period when the nuns of Port Royal, urged on by the Bishop of Langres and his associates from the Oratory, were cudgelling their brains for 'inspired thoughts' on the Sacrament (*ante*, p. 145). The Mère Geneviève, afterwards Abbess, whose inspirations the clear-headed Angélique de S. Jean found so lamentable, led the way with a *Chapelet du S. Sacrement*, a leaflet of pious ejaculations, admired and printed by the Bishop of Langres. The Mère Agnès, questioned on this subject by Père de Condren of the Oratory (successor to the Cardinal de Bérulle) acknowledged that the attributes given by the Mother Geneviève did not quite express her own feelings, her *anéantissement*, before the Sacrament. At that Father's request, she wrote accordingly in her turn a Chapelet, the *Chapelet Secret*, as it was called to distinguish it from the first, 'composed of sixteen attributes with brief explanation of each attribute.' 'She did it with such facility and so little mental effort that she said afterwards, and even wrote, she could attribute none of it to herself, because she seemed to have lent only her hand while another spirit than her own dictated to her what she wrote almost without reflection; in such a manner that it must have been either the spirit of truth or the spirit of delusion

who guided her, and that it seemed to her she herself had no share in it.' ¹

The facile composition was at the time much admired by her Directors, and in particular, we are told, by the Archbishop of Sens. It remained, however, for several years in the obscurity which it actually merited, not even printed but communicated in manuscript to one or two persons interested in the new Order,—to the titular foundress, the Duchesse de Longueville, and to that Carmelite Mother, Marie de Jésus, whom the Bishop of Langres had wished to make its head. This poor woman died in the solitary confinement to which her own Superior had relegated her; and the work of unknown origin, found in her cell, made a passing stir of mingled admiration and criticism, which had died away, however, long before the Archbishop of Sens thought fit to call attention again to the work.

Six years had elapsed since its composition. The *Maison du S. Sacrement* had attained, despite difficulties, a certain repute; it was established close to the Court, and brought into notice by the Duchesse de Longueville as well as by the Bishop of Langres. The Carmelites watched its growth with anxiety; their ally the Archbishop of Sens saw with chagrin the success of a House from which he had severed himself. The dangerous tendencies of the Bishop of Langres, with whom formerly he had been in full harmony, became suddenly apparent to him and, forgetting his former praise of the *Chapelet Secret*, he found in that unpretentious work a pretext for denouncing them. The work was presented for censure, not as the devotional exercise of a nun, but as embodying the whole teaching and devotion of the *Maison du S. Sacrement*.

It is needless to trace the course of the affair; how the Bishop of Langres defended and the Archbishop of Sens replied; how Saint-Cyran wrote, and wrote again, in defence of the *Chapelet*; how the Jesuits entered the fray. Slight as was its first origin, the fame of the scandal spread, as Angélique relates, even to the Court, and gravely touched the honour of the House. The charge of 'sorcery' was due,

¹ *Relation . . . de la querelle du Chapelet Secret. . . , Mémoires pour servir . . . , vol. i, pp. 457-8.*

it may be presumed, to the 'inspired' manner of composition. The actual writer denied conscious authorship; the theory of the day left the credit accordingly either to God or to the Devil. Happily Rome, whither the matter was referred, found the work, if not sublime enough for the one authorship, too innocuous for the other, and suppressed it merely as 'unserviceable'.

The conflagration, though of straw, left-sparks that rekindled later to the detriment of Saint-Cyran, who, having defended the work, was accused by the Jesuits of being its author. For the moment, its salutary effect was to solder the friendship between him and the Bishop of Langres, and to give him firm footing at the *Maison du S. Sacrement*.

Narrative of the Mère Angélique (continued)

'Shortly after, the Bishop returned to his Diocese, and, recommending us to M. de Saint-Cyran, he commanded us to obey him in all things. He begged him also to preach to us and to confess us. M. de Saint-Cyran refused at first to confess us, but he preached to us for the space of nearly three years in our Parlour, the Archbishop not wishing any one to preach in our Church; and this was a singular providence of God for us, for, besides the fact that, preaching publicly, he could not have given us particular instructions or any so suitable to Nuns, we should have been overwhelmed with persons offering to preach, and should not have had M. de Saint-Cyran. He did not fail to show us this charity every Feast-day and Sunday, ten or twelve as we were; and there were present also three Priests, friends and close neighbours of ours, and two ladies. These persons were so delighted that several times, after the sermon and the departure of M. de Saint-Cyran, they approached the grille, and said to me that it pertained only to this man to preach the word of God. And none the less they have been since among those who have taken part in the persecution, forgetting what they had heard to believe in the calumny of inflamed persons. Our Sisters were also all enraptured.

'M. de Saint-Cyran, after having preached to us for a year or a little less, consented to confess us, whereat all our Sisters were in great joy; and they all wished to make him general confessions. I sent word of this to the Bishop (M. de Langres), for I gave him an account of everything; he professed to be very glad, and I believe it was true. I was the last to confess to M. de Saint-Cyran, dreading the great righteousness

of this Servant of God, although I revered it exceedingly, and although indeed God had given me the same idea of true devotion and the Religious Life from the moment when He touched me by the Sermon of the Capuchin of which I have spoken. For I saw forthwith the necessity of true obedience, of contempt of the flesh and of all sensual pleasures, and the merit of true poverty; and God gave me so much love of these virtues that I breathed only to find means of practising them. But my wretchedness, my levity, and the small amount of true help I had received to correspond to this first grace,—although my will remained firm in the depths of my heart to seek the means of following it—, caused me to commit very great faults and infidelities, for which I had very frequent remorse of conscience which gave me extreme anguish. I recovered myself, and straightway I returned to my languor. I dreaded then what in truth I loved and desired, even the strong, holy, upright and enlightened guidance of this Servant of God. I regarded it as the death of my will, of my discernment and my own opinion, whereof I had hitherto preserved the greater part. I wished not to deceive him or abuse the grace God showed me, after that I had so greatly desired to find a man whose force of spirit in the truth should overwhelm my own. Further, I had an extreme difficulty, and one natural to me, in confessing, and to him yet more than to any other. His great wisdom made me fear to acquaint him with so many follies, and his saintliness with so many infidelities and sins. This difficulty was so great, that at first I told him that, although it was my true will to acquaint him with the whole condition of my soul, God compelling me, in the belief that He would assist me to quit my wretchedness, the burden of which was so heavy, nevertheless it was, it seemed to me, impossible for me to confess, unless God were to show me an extraordinary grace, which I begged him very humbly to ask for me.

‘At first he told me that I must not do violence to my spirit, and that, as I had told him I had already made several general confessions, there was no need for me to begin one again. But he could not convince me, because, finding him so saintly in his Conduct, and God giving me an all new desire to follow faithfully the first thoughts it had pleased Him to give me of living as a true Nun and in a more favourable condition than I had as yet been, since I was discharged of the Abbey,—for this Superiority of the House of the Holy Sacrament was only for a time—, I had great desire to avail myself of the grace God showed me of having met this holy man, abandoning myself wholly to his Conduct, and renouncing my own will

and my own opinion, which had caused me to commit so many faults. To that end I believed myself obliged to acquaint him with them minutely: and had it been possible to me to let him see them, as I saw them, without telling them, I should have esteemed myself happy. But my speech was suspended, and it seemed to me impossible to put into words that which I saw with so much trouble.

‘In fact during the first interview that I had with him for this purpose, lasting two hours, I told him only my general dispositions, and made protestation of the desire I had to obey him, as God impelled me, begging him to help me and to make me do without reserve all which God should acquaint him that I ought to do to satisfy Him.

‘A few days after, he returned, and I believe that he obtained for me by his prayers the grace of overcoming my extreme repugnance to confess, since I did it then without great difficulty. I became so contented and happy that I felt a different creature: and, although God made me feel sorrow for my sins, I may say that I have never had so true or even so keen a satisfaction in all my life, and that never had I had so much pleasure in amusing myself and laughing as I had then in weeping. I ought not to relate this, since I am writing only that which concerns the guidance and the providence of God for this House; but I tell it because all our Sisters, with exception of two, were in the same disposition of penitence and of joy.

‘There was so close union of all our hearts, that, in a silence carefully kept, it seemed as though our Sisters spoke to each other, to confirm each other in the desire of religious perfection. Punctuality in all observances was very great. Our Chapel was in one of the noisiest streets in Paris, where one heard all sorts of follies. On our first going there, they had difficulty to avoid laughing and often they remained unable to sing. But after we had come entirely under the Direction of M. de Saint-Cyran, they were so attentive as not to have the smallest desire to laugh.

‘At the Conference, when she who was adverse to us was not present’ (Mlle de Chamesson), ‘whether because it was her turn to be before the Holy Sacrament or for some other reason, we spoke only of our happiness and of the acts of grace and of fidelity we owed to God, and of the grace He had shown us in teaching us the reality of our obligations.

‘Mme de Ligny, who was our Benefactress and who entered the House, after having been on a journey of several months in the country, was so surprised on her return to see the change in the House that she was quite enchanted, above

all with regard to her daughter, who was young, fastidious, and who, although with goodwill a Nun, had kept the spirit of the world, was vain and readily accepted little indulgences. But so soon as she had made her renewal to M. de Saint-Cyran, there was no one more humble, or who better loved mortification and poverty.

‘It must be observed that it was not by any violence or constraint that this saintly man brought persons to the spirit of penitence, neither did he prescribe great mortification and austerities. But God gave him grace so to touch hearts, by the force of sound truths, with the love and respect due to God, as to engender sorrow at having offended Him and so great a desire to satisfy Him, that one desired always to do more than he wished. He took amazing care to cut off all occasions of sin, and to that end he noted in confessions the most minute circumstances, in order to learn the inclinations and the bent of the heart. His exactitude was not grievous to souls. On the contrary, as one saw it proceed, not from a severe or scrupulous spirit, but from genuine charity and righteousness, it gave people great consolation and hope that God willed them to be cured, having let them fall into the hands of so great a Physician.

‘Good Mme de Ligny, as I have said, was quite delighted, and said to me frequently: *This man must have a quite Apostolic grace and Conduct to bring about such changes in souls.* She entered our House to make a retreat; and as, before knowing the Direction of M. de Saint-Cyran, she had pledged herself to that of a Father of great repute, she did not dare omit to beg him to direct her in this retreat also. He came accordingly every day to our Parlour to see her, and he wished me to be present that I might afterwards recall to the mind of this lady what he had said, which in truth was very beautiful and very good. But he contented himself with instructing, without ever inquiring into her dispositions or how far these truths which he said every day had profited her. So that, at the end of this retreat, she saw that this Father had said to her many beautiful things, but all general without applying them to her particular needs; which made her believe that this Direction would prove of little use. She told me that she begged me in the name of God to obtain from M. de Saint-Cyran that he would be pleased to direct her, and make her make a renewal; that she would come a month later. And, as I said to her that M. de Saint-Cyran would be unwilling to take charge of her, because she was rich, she answered me: *I will tell him all my possessions, and will dispose of them according to his orders.*

‘But this good lady, on the morrow of her departure, fell ill to death, and straightway sent to beg me with all possible urgency to persuade M. de Saint-Cyran to go and see her ; but he held it undesirable, her relatives having already sent for this other good Father, to whom he feared to give offence. He told me to send word to her to trouble about nothing, that this good Father would aid her very well at death, and that, if God restored her to life, he would serve her as she wished. She received this answer humbly, but expressed distress because she was always praised. And, as she entered upon the death-agony, a priest, whom it seemed God sent for her consolation, said to her : *Well, Madame, we must die in penitence.* Then, turning to the place by her bedside where he was, and quitting those who extolled her, she replied to him : *Ah ! yes, my Father,* and, beginning the *Miserere*, she said it through to the end, and died soon after (in 1636).

‘She was a lady of very good intelligence and of great virtue, and one to whom God had taught the truth of the need for Christian penitence. During her retreat she discoursed to me of nothing else, and of the vanity of the world, of riches and of honours, with great resolution never more to take part in it. And indeed, on visiting her brother the Chancellor the day that she left us, and the eve of her mortal illness, she was so estranged from all the splendours of his house, that she seemed to him a perfect fool (*toute idiote*), and he said so in complaint to some one.

‘She had said several times when with us : *How I pity my brother ! I pray God that he may be expelled from the Court, for I do not know how otherwise he can possibly be saved.* It appeared, by what has happened since, that God withdrew this lady from the world in so good a disposition, in order not to expose her to the extreme pain of seeing the persecutions which M. de Saint-Cyran and the truth have sustained, and in which some of her close relatives, whom she greatly loved, have taken part. We lost in her much, but I was consoled by this thought. She died in the month of January, and from that time I began to think of retiring from this House, in order to bring disputes to an end.

‘I have already said that the Bull of the *Institut du S. Sacrement* gave the superiority of the House to three Bishops ; a thing which gave great offence to M. de Paris ; and although by force of solicitation, and out of regard for Mme de Longueville, who had taken at my request the name of Foundress, he had let us take possession of the House, he permitted us only to repeat the service in the Choir ; for he did not allow preaching there, and still less the giving of the Habit to any

Sister : in order, by leaving us thus, to force them to leave him sole Superior. We had been in this state already for nearly three years, and one of the Prelates Superior (M. de Sens), had by the providence of God altogether severed from us before we entered, and secretly solicited M. de Paris against us ; and, not having succeeded in preventing our entrance, he had at once roused against us the war of the *Chapelet*. The second Prelate (M. de Langres) entirely changed the first maxims wherein we had seen him, and began to condemn the Direction of M. de Saint-Cyran, whom he had so greatly revered, and to which he had so expressly commanded us to submit, as the best and most saintly that could be. We, who had found it such with so great profit for our souls, had no desire to leave it ; which caused us to dissimulate, making as though we did not see the distaste he had for it, and which he made only too plain to us by his coldness, not venturing to contradict himself, nor to condemn openly what he had so greatly praised and approved.

‘ I believe I must tell one of the chief causes of his change, which was on account of a young lady of rank (Mlle de Chameson, Canoness of Remimont), whom he had given us, and who had fallen into his hands on the death of Mme her mother, who belonged to his Diocese, and he was present at her death. This girl being left without mother, without means corresponding to her rank, and without support, moved him to pity : and as she had told him she had good will to be a Nun, and as he found in her besides the natural gifts he desired in his *Sœurs du S. Sacrement*, he sent her to us before we were yet in the House, to begin to train her.

‘ At first she showed signs of great devotion for prayer and for bodily austerities, although she was feeble and in bad health ; but she was little uniform in true mortification, doing more in health than she could, and seeking in illness more indulgence than was necessary. She had besides a very high and very sensitive spirit, and yet sometimes she corrected herself very humbly. And perhaps, had she been happy enough to pass wholly under the Direction of M. de Saint-Cyran, she might have made a good Nun. At first she appreciated him greatly, and admired his charity, his discretion, and his uniformity, the light of his spirit making her see the weak side of others in many things.

‘ She wished accordingly to make him a renewal (in 1635) like the rest, and began by complaining of the fact that, although she was still only secular and quite fresh in religion, M. de Langres had desired her to be Mistress of Novices and of the Pupils, and to take part in all the affairs of the House ;

that she recognized it was very bad for her, and was entirely disproportioned to her condition, which ought to be in the abasement of the Novitiate. M. de Saint-Cyran told her that she was quite right, and advised her to beg me to relieve her of everything, and to treat her as a Novice, which she did. But I suspected shrewdly that she was sorry to be taken at her word. However, I wrote about it to the Bishop, who was absent ; and he sent word to me to persevere ; and I did so, giving the charge of the pupils to another ; which put her into so ill a humour, that she did not complete her renewal, and did not afterwards see M. de Saint-Cyran any more in private. Her chagrin was pitiable. Everything one did offended her. She was even in ill humour with M. de Langres, to whom she no longer wrote as she had been accustomed. The whole House endured her with great patience, without letting it appear that they saw her contrarieties.

When M. de Langres returned and I told him of her condition, he himself recognized it from her speeches and from the dissatisfaction she displayed with her Direction, which displeased him, because he was still in union with M. de Saint-Cyran. But it happened one day that he asked for her, and in a three hours' interview she so completely won him over that, seeing him afterwards, I found him quite changed. He told me that she had moved him to great pity ; that she was a troubled soul, and that at bottom there were many things of God in her. There chanced another occasion, when, the Bishop having begged for his opinion, M. de Saint-Cyran gave it with his usual sincerity ; which the Bishop took so well that he thanked him for it with great feeling, because he was very ill at the time. But having recovered his health, he was offended at the truth he had been told, and he withdrew little by little from him ; seeing him no more, and even coming no more to the *S. Sacrement* save to speak to his *Fille*, and to me by courtesy.

He reproached me for being too retired, saying one no longer knew me, that I repulsed all our friends. For example, he alleged to me that an Abbé Commendatory of the Order of S. Augustin, who came sometimes to say Mass in our Chapel, and who had asked for me, had complained that at first I had received him with great open-heartedness, and that I had said good things to him which had greatly touched him ; and that, when he returned afterwards, I had scorned to take him under my Direction, and that, instead of receiving him with my previous kindness, I had asked his pardon for having ventured to speak as though instructing him, and had acknowledged that it had been a boldness in me, since women should

not meddle with Direction. I replied that it was all true, and that I had confessed for what I had said to this Abbé, my conscience reproaching me as for a great fault; and, besides its being an irregularity for women to meddle with teaching men and Priests, that I had more matters in the House than I could attend to, if I were to render to our Sisters the service that I owed them.

‘That did not satisfy him. But neither did his disapproval shake me, since I was so persuaded by my own experience of the obligation that Nuns have to fly absolutely all commerce with the world (under whatsoever pretext of piety it may be, save indispensable obligations, which must be well examined, with great fear of extending them too far), that I esteemed myself happy to have found a Direction which had taught me this first and most important duty of a Nun; and I can say that M. de Saint-Cyran had in that only revived the first movements of the grace of our Lord upon me, which gave me so ardent desire for separation from all the world, that, had I not been a woman, I believe I should have been in a place so remote as to have been known by no one. I had been very faithless to this grace, although always with great remorse of conscience, and it was a great happiness for me that this saintly man from the first recommended me nothing so much; knowing how far it was necessary for me, to cut off an infinity of faults that vanity, promptitude and the natural inconsiderateness of my spirit made me commit in conversation, besides those that I committed against my Profession.

‘Seeing all this misunderstanding with this Superior, I judged that it would be expedient to deliver this House into the hands of Monseigneur of Paris alone, in accordance with the first rule of the Church. And because I should have had great difficulty in persuading Mme de Longueville, who was closely united with the Bishop, and with his spiritual Daughter (*Fille*), who had won her over; and, since I had passionately desired this Bishop to be Superior, my change would have been judged lightness and inconstancy; it occurred to me that, by means of a third person, I might persuade M. de Paris to remove me from this Monastery, to send me back to Port Royal, and in my place bring here the Mother Geneviève, Abbess of Port Royal, who would do what he desired towards making him sole Superior. I suggested this idea to M. de Saint-Cyran, who approved it, and immediately I spoke to some of our friends; and it was done so opportunely, that, without the Bishop knowing anything, or his *Fille*, a Grand-Vicar brought the Mother from Port Royal and, at a given sign, I was at the door, let her in, and myself left at the same moment

(February 10, 1636). Some of our Nuns were informed, but they did not let it appear.

'So soon as the Bishop's *Fille* saw this good Mother, she was ravished for joy, thinking she could do what she liked with her; and, instantly making herself mistress of the House, she sent to inform the Bishop and Mme de Longueville, who came. Although they gave it to be understood by the Nuns, who they knew loved me, that they were sorry at this violence, it gave them as a fact great joy; and they took this change to be a miraculous working of God, who willed to establish this Monastery according to their mind.

'They proceeded to caress the Mother, flattering her and saying that God had reserved to her the accomplishment of this work, and the *Fille* (Mademoiselle de Chamesson) rendered her duty and an excellent submission. This Mother, who was very virtuous, informed us of all. But one day the Bishop took her in hand so adroitly, and with so much devotion, that he conquered her; and she promised him that she would do what he wished, which was, chiefly, not to send away his '*Fille*'. For, since we had told her it would be necessary to begin by that, she had told the Bishop that she did not believe her to have a true vocation.

'After this discourse of the Bishop to the Mother, the '*Fille*', well instructed, came and threw herself at her feet, and made her so many fine protestations of obedience that she was yet further touched. In consequence she wrote to me that there seemed to her a great change in this girl, and in a style that showed me she was shaken. I answered her that I begged we might preserve silence during the Octave of the Holy Sacrament (for it was the Eve when she wrote), and that afterwards I would tell her my thoughts. At the end of the Octave, she was the first to write, acknowledging with sorrow that she had been won over by the girl, who had deceived her, and at once she frankly told her that she could not keep her. She, who had a high spirit, did not need to be told twice, and at once informed the Bishop and the Princess' (Madame de Longueville, the titular foundress) 'who came herself to fetch her at the door without entering, and never came there again. There was also a Lay Sister who had come with the other Nuns of the Bishop's Diocese, who desired to leave on seeing this girl leave, and thus the House remained in great peace. And soon after, Monseigneur of Paris having been begged to carry the establishment into effect, remaining sole Superior, he gave the Habit himself to five Sisters.'

CHAPTER XIII

Events at Port Royal during Angélique's absence and after her return.—
Further dissensions within that Convent, and final peace.

ANGÉLIQUE had returned to Port Royal, and relieved the *Maison du S. Sacrement* from its disabilities, by a stratagem which, however excusable under the circumstances, may perhaps seem to the lights of the plain man a regrettable lapse from her wonted straight-dealing. Her narrative retraces next the thread of events at Port Royal during her three years' absence.

The nuns from Tard had been speedily sent back to their own diocese, leaving the pliant Mother Geneviève still Abbess. Their departure, however, was the signal for new difficulties. Certain monks thought the juncture favourable to recover their footing and win back Port Royal for their Order. Trading on the elder nuns' love of their ancient Rule of S. Benedict, infringed and altered in sundry respects by the nuns from Tard, they tried to persuade the Abbess, not merely to resume that Rule, but to place the convent again under Cistercian control. Angélique's renewed influence prevented the reversion, but the matter was rife in ill-feeling. She narrates :—

Narrative of the Mère Angélique (continued).

'I must tell what passed at Port Royal after I left it to come to the *S. Sacrement*, that is to say from 1633 onwards. I left, as I have said, the Mother Geneviève Abbess, and the Mother divested of the Bishop's Monastery, Prioress, in the state and under the Direction that I have described above. But I omitted to say that we had been deprived of the observances of our Rule. Previously Matins had been said at two in the morning; they were now said at nine in the evening, and followed by Lauds. Further many of the observances of our Order had been cut off to introduce others, but above all simplicity and poverty; not that any one had anything



L'ABBÉ DE SAINT-CYRAN

From engraving of portrait by Philippe de Champaigne

in private, but all had to be more beautiful and more refined than had been our practice.

‘By the will of God, three months after we had left, M. de Paris’ (the Archbishop) ‘ordered the Mother Abbess to send back to her Monastery the said Mother Prioress and all the Nuns of her Monastery, six in number. No solicitations were spared to prevent this departure. But God in his providence rendered M. de Paris inflexible ; and, to facilitate the journey, he even furnished the expenses. And because the first triennial of the Mother Geneviève expired at that time, and M. de Paris knew that there was a desire to elect this Prioress whom he wished to send back, he had the election deferred until the Nuns should have left. It took place after, and the Mother Geneviève was elected a second time Abbess (September the 10th, 1633) and my Sister Suzanne du S. Esprit (de la Roche), who died Abbess of Maubuisson, was made Prioress.

‘So soon as the Monks of our Order, especially a certain Abbé de Prières, saw these two Sisters alone, they went very often to the House, offered to say Mass, and discoursed to the Abbess and the Prioress about the Observances of the Rule, and the ceremonies of the Order ; in such a manner that they gave them the wish to resume them. The Mother spoke about it to M. de Saint-Cyran, who was at the pains of visiting them, and he approved their return to the former Observances ; but these Monks desired further that they should replace themselves under their jurisdiction, which he did not approve. And, as the Mother wrote to me regarding this re-establishment, I begged her strongly not to think of replacing herself under the Order, and to believe it would be the greatest evil she could do to the Monastery. She credited me ; but the Prioress had been so convinced by the Monks that she had no peace until she left the House, a thing which was again a result of Divine Providence. For this Nun, who was very austere, virtuous and gentle, did all she could to persuade our Sisters ; and if she had remained through the dissensions that God permitted to occur afterwards, she would have done us great harm. When she saw accordingly that there was no means of accomplishing her design of replacing the House under the jurisdiction of the Monks, she contrived by their agency that a young Abbess of the Order (Madame d’Argensoles) should ask for her to help in reforming her Monastery.

‘When first this affair was communicated to me, at the time when I was at the *S. Sacrement*, I opposed it strongly, for I had much affection for this Nun, and believed that the House, where she was Prioress and Mistress of Novices, would sustain a great loss. I begged M. de Saint-Cyran to see

her. He had the goodness, and did all he could to make her see the obligation she was under of keeping her vow of stability. She seemed to acquiesce, but her wounded spirit could not recover ; and God for our good did not permit it ; so that I was informed she was in great inquietude, and the Monk I have mentioned came to speak to me about it. Seeing that, I told him that, having done all that I could to retain her, charity and my affection for her constraining me, I was quit before God, and that she might go when she would. Her leave was accordingly obtained, and she came to see me at the *S. Sacrement*, where she remained some days. I made her understand that her departure was a temptation, but this did not heal her. She offered to return to Port Royal, but I saw well that it was not from her heart, and further that her spirit had lost its former simplicity. And I confess that I am guilty of it, not having directed her well, nor discerned rightly her spirit and the leading of God upon her. Her virtue, her humility, her gentleness, and her mortification, had dazzled my spirit, without considering that there was much in it of mere nature ; and that, besides, she had not the qualities necessary for government, listening too much to her impulses, when one gave her opportunity by an office, and that she was good only under the yoke of obedience as simple Nun, and in this estate she gave a great example.

Three years after her Profession (1629), I had taken her with me to a Monastery of the Diocese of Rouen (at *S. Aubin*), whose Abbess, after being some time with us to study reform, desired that I should go for a time to her. I remained three months, and also this Nun, who edified the whole House. As I was returning, Madame the Abbess of Gif desired me to go to her also for some time, she being quite fresh in charge. But I fell ill two days after I arrived, and it was decided I should return to our Monastery. And as this good Abbess was distressed that I could not stay longer with her, I proposed, without reflection and on the impulse of my spirit, without praying God or consulting any one, to leave her this Nun ; which she accepted with joy, seeing her very good. Straightway her spirit took wing, but so discreetly and so gently that one scarcely perceived it. A year after she was recalled, when I was no longer in charge. Immediately she took to extraordinary devotions and to all the new practices, which suited her spirit. The Prioress made much of her, because she was a fine figure and of high rank. These two Nuns, both virtuous, had this common attachment to singular devotions, and that is the only thing I had noticed in my Sister Suzanne du *S. Esprit* which had shocked me during

her Novitiate, when we looked upon her as an angel, so irreprehensible was she. As for love of her rank, I had not seen it ; for she did not speak of it, loving moreover what was mean and abject. It is true that, shortly before her Profession, she asked Monsieur her brother for a Book of their House, where all her ancestors were depicted, to show me. That displeased me greatly, but nevertheless I would not think ill of her, attributing it to simpleness. But in the sequel I recognized that this worm of vanity had done great harm to this soul. Nevertheless I do not doubt but that God has pardoned it, for in truth she loved Him, and would have suffered martyrdom for Him. He has greatly humiliated her, nothing having prospered in her hands in spite of her ardent desires to serve Him.'

This affair again increased the growing volume of ill-will felt for Saint-Cyran, the offended Abbé de Prières ranging himself presently with his calumniators. But, like the affair of the *Chapelet*, its immediate consequences were to the good and furthered the return of Port Royal to its early spirit, reuniting the two sisters, Angélique and Agnès. Before peace and concord finally reigned there was, however, a last grievous strife :—

'God drew one good result, among others, from the exit of this Nun from Port Royal, which was that, seeing that there remained only the Mère Geneviève who could serve the House, after having asked advice from M. de Saint-Cyran, I said to M. the Bishop of Langres, that I begged him very humbly to bring back the Mère Agnès from the Monastery where he had sent her, because, as he could well see, she was absolutely necessary to Port Royal. We were then on very cold terms, and he no longer opposed me, knowing that I took advice before asking him anything, so that, although it did not please him, he at once granted it, and I lost no time in sending to fetch her.

'She arrived with five of our Sisters, November the 20th, 1635, and stopped at the *Monastère du S. Sacrement*. I found her so prejudiced against M. de Saint-Cyran, against me, and against the changes that had been made at Port Royal (because of those things which the Bishop and the Nuns had established there contrary to the customs of the Order she had so loved), that I found her a different creature ; however, she spoke with discretion and gentleness. But the others were so impassioned that it cannot be told what were their excesses. I was very

grieved about it, and I wrote to the Mother Abbess of Port Royal, to warn her, that she might not be dismayed or afflicted at seeing them in this state. And taking farewell of the Mother Agnès, I told her that I hoped before six months from that date to see her in a different frame of mind.

‘The Bishop came to see them, and there were great caresses on his side and tears on theirs, at having the misfortune of quitting his Diocese. I begged M. de Saint-Cyran to see the Mother Agnès, and informed him of this change in her spirit, but that I believed, however, she would recover when he had spoken to her, knowing her so reasonable and so God-fearing that the truth would at once restore her spirit. He excused himself, as he did always at first, fearing to put himself forward. But as I told him he was pledged to help her, since he had defended her and borne her so good a witness in the defence of the *Chapelet*, he at length promised. He saw her once or twice; and, some days after, she wrote to me, recalling that I had said she would change before six months, that six days had sufficed to undeceive her in place of six months; that she had seen M. de Saint-Cyran, and could say, without drawing comparisons, that never had any man spoken as this one. I was very greatly comforted on reading this letter, to see my sister in this disposition, and that God repaired in His goodness the evil I had done, sending her to that House in consequence of the engagement into which I had precipitated myself; a thing which would have done great harm to ours, and would have ruined it utterly, had not the Divine Providence drawn good from all my faults, by a working of His infinite mercy for which I can never show sufficient gratitude.

‘As soon as the Mother Agnès was won, the others who had come with her divided off and linked themselves with Madame de Pontcarré, with whom they mingled their murmurs in her room, and the Bishop (M. de Langres) came to see them in the parlour of that lady, and she conveyed to him their letters. There were also a Father of the Oratory (the Father Vigné), a friend of the Bishop’s, who came to see them. One of these Nuns (my Sister Marie Claire) was my own sister, and the most inflamed of all, in her belief that there was not in the world a greater Saint than this Bishop; and she looked upon us as the most faithless persons that ever were, to the grace God had given us in so holy a Director; which led this poor Sister to pray God day and night with extreme fervour and many tears, that it would please Him to undeceive us. Her great devoutness, and her punctuality in the Observances of the Rule, made her loved and respected in the House, besides that she had so great a kindness for everybody, and

especially for the sick, that she was always ready to serve them ; and this caused her to attract to her side some who thought that she was not valued as much as she deserved.

‘All this took place, however, quietly, because of the great respect and confidence given to the Mother Agnès, who, moreover, was very united with the Mother Geneviève, who was Abbess, and who made her Prioress directly she returned ; so that it was only those in revolt who dared speak openly, and that but seldom, and only when something offended them.

‘After I had returned from the *S. Sacrement*, I was given the post of Mistress of Novices ; and judging that I had need, in order to be able to serve them, of a Confessor with the qualities necessary for leading souls to God, of which he whom we had, and who had been given by the Bishop, had none, I begged the Mother Agnès, who was Superior (through the absence of the Mother Abbess sent to the *S. Sacrement*), to implore M. de Saint-Cyran to give us one. He did so, and sent us M. Singlin, who then had charge of the *Hôpital de la Pitié*, where Madame his mother had given herself up to serve the poor with great charity. I at once put all our Novices into his hands, and such of our Pupils as it was desired to prepare for the Holy Communion at Easter, and we saw soon the fruit of the saintly Direction of this good Ecclesiastic. He went also to confess our Sisters of the *S. Sacrement*, M. de Saint-Cyran having judged it better to do so no longer, after I had left ; besides that he went to his Abbey, so that M. Singlin alone remained to us.

‘Little by little the rebellious Nuns retracted, and those whom they had estranged retracted also, with the exception of two (one of whom was my sister above spoken of), who strengthened themselves every day in their resistance by their communication with the Bishop ; which obliged the Mother Agnès, after she had been elected Abbess (September, 1636) to beg him very humbly in a letter not to come any more to the Monastery. From that time he came no more, but the letters between him and his Nuns still continued.

‘At the election of the Mother Agnès, we received an evident help from God. These rebellious Nuns, supported by the Bishop and Madame de Pontcarré, had done all they could to prevent it ; and the Grand Vicar, who presided in place of M. de Paris, had been quite won over against us, so that we were in great fear lest there should be a division. But God by His grace did not permit it, and there were so few who did not give her their voice, that the President, all in anger, was obliged to pronounce her legitimately elected ; at which all the Sisters were very joyful, with exception of these four

or five. But in six months they all returned to God, with movements of penitence so great that they edified the Community more than they had scandalized it. My Sister Marie Claire, as she who had been the most culpable in her passion, was also by grace of God the most strongly touched. She wished her penitence to be as visible as her faults had been. She wore the habit, and performed the duties, of Lay Sister six months, and would have done so all her life, if M. de Paris, whom she implored very humbly, had not refused her this grace, which she desired with great ardour to repair her faults.

‘Madame de Pontcarré, with whom she had broken, was very surprised to see her and the others with these good movements; but she was not any the more touched; on the contrary it exasperated her. She gave a very faithful report to the Bishop, who also was annoyed; and he composed the Memoir which has been so much talked of, which he gave to another Bishop (M. de Harlay de Sancy, Bishop of S. Malo) to give to the Cardinal de Richelieu, who on other grounds of more weight with him, and also being urged to it by the Père Joseph, caused M. de Saint-Cyran to be arrested by order of the King, and had him imprisoned in the Bois de Vincennes, May the 14th, 1638.’

Angélique’s narrative closes here. We must pause for a moment upon these final dissensions within the convent, before passing to the outer events which now so deeply affected it—the imprisonment of Saint-Cyran and the so-called ‘movement of Jansenism’.

The figure of Madame de Pontcarré need not long detain us. Suffice it to say that, received as ‘benefactress’ in the house on the first settling in Paris, she had soon proved an exacting and troublesome inmate. At first pious and kindly, she might, Angélique thought, have come to good had she been well directed. She made a ‘sacrifice’, in the early days and at the instance of the Bishop of Langres, of her lute-playing, to which she was much attached. But she soon relapsed into such mitigated ‘worldliness’ as was possible in her conventual residence. A spacious apartment was allowed her in the new building, where she built a terrace for herself and harassed the nuns with the constant watering of her orange-trees. As the Bishop grew more mundane, his intercourse with this lady became frivolous to a degree that shocked

and alarmed the Sisters appointed to wait on her. He would spend whole days in her parlour ; their intimacy was so great that she saw to the furnishing of his new house in Paris. Finally she became, as Angélique briefly tells, centre of this party of malcontents in the Convent, their go-between with the Bishop, and her parlour their place of rendezvous. In the sequel, as peace—and dullness, the poor lady doubtless experienced—reigned again, she became herself so discontented that Port Royal, hampered though it still was for money, found it expedient to be rid of her at all costs and, undertaking to pay her a yearly income for the money sunk in the building, bade her seek another residence. Madame de Pontcarré was thenceforth, in their eyes, merely one of the calumniators of Saint-Cyran.¹

The penitence of Marie Claire is of another order of interest, and belongs to the heart of our subject. Among the Arnauld sisterhood there is no more touching figure than this tender impressionable girl, child of Angélique's spirit, kindling with her beloved sister's ardour, brought by that same sister under an estranging influence, and reunited with her at length only to find a last outlet for her high-strung fervour in undying penitence. The niece, Angélique de S. Jean, tells the tale.

¹ v. *Relation de ce que Madame de Pontcarré fit à Port-Royal, depuis qu'elle y entra comme bienfaitrice, jusqu'à sa sortie. Par la Mère Marie-Dorothée de l'Incarnation le Conte, Mémoires pour servir . . .*, vol. i, p. 495 seq.

CHAPTER XIV

The tale of Sœur Marie Claire *Arnauld*, her revolt and her subsequent penitence; as narrated by the Mère Angélique de S. Jean *Arnauld*, her niece.

THE reader is acquainted already with Marie Claire in girlhood, and will remember how her love for the maternal elder sister conquered her natural fastidiousness (*ante*, Chap. III, p. 40). That love remained intense and dominant, although Angélique, jealous of all human motives sullyng the purity of God's service, strove to check rather than encourage it.

'After the years spent at Maubuisson, Marie Claire returned to Port Royal with the Mother Angélique in 1623 when the King had appointed another Abbess to Maubuisson. This great Novitiate of thirty Sisters whom they had trained there, returned with them to Port Royal, and their fervour having only increased by this change, Sister Marie Claire continued to devote herself with the other Mothers to feed this ardour by the inventions they sought in order to test their virtue and purify it in the test.

'God took heed also to test hers; the Mother Angélique contributed thereto with Him, and, because she believed that Sister Marie Claire's affection for her sprang from a natural ardour and vivacity which it was difficult for her to moderate, she mortified her frequently on this point.'¹

The Bishop of Langres, on his first acquaintance with Port Royal went to greater extremes:—

'It happened that at this time a Prelate (the Bishop of Langres), in whom the Mother Angélique reposed confidence because of his high reputation of capacity and of piety, came to Port Royal. He noticed this excessive attachment which Sister Marie Claire seemed to have for her, and he said that, were

¹ *Relation de la Vie et des Vertus de la Sœur Marie de Sainte-Claire Arnauld. Par la Mère Angélique de S. Jean Arnauld, sa nièce, Mémoires pour servir . . .*, vol. iii, p. 429 seq.

he in her place, he would never speak to her. This sufficed to the good disposition of heart of this true Religious; so soon as she had learnt from his words what she believed to be the will of God, she listened no longer to her suffering or to her reason. She undertook this exercise of virtue which cost her so dear, and courageously gave to God the sole gratification she had kept for herself when she renounced all, in such a manner that for some years she did not speak at all to the Mother Angélique, not even for the commonest things, and scarcely ventured even to look at her. God willed to add yet further to her voluntary sacrifice. For as this was the time of the transference of the Monastery of Port Royal des Champs to Paris, the Mother Angélique, on going to establish that House, did not take her with her, and let her come only among the very last, about a year later; so that she learned during this separation which she had never before experienced, that there is no union secure, or capable of making us happy, save that which links us to an immutable object, and which makes us find in Him all we ought to love for His sake.¹

There had been already a briefer parting. When Angélique was at Lys just before leaving for Paris, she had dictated the forcible letters to Marie Claire and other nuns, alluded to by her companion nun, reproving their weak distress and anxiety. Again, subsequent to the removal, Marie Claire was sent for a time to aid in reform of a convent at Auxerre. Her clinging spirit made even this absence grievous; it was but slight preparation for the real trial which awaited her on transference to the convent at Tard:—

‘She, with our Sister Angélique de Ste Agnès *de Marie de la Falaire* and another, followed the Mother Agnès, some six months later, to that Convent.’

‘They had already been made to start on this journey towards the end of November, 1629, at the beginning of a bad winter and in a time of melting snow, which had so flooded the roads that they would themselves have been submerged had they persisted on their way, so that after two days those who escorted them were forced to bring them back to Port Royal, whence they set forth again only in the following month of March. Thus it was that this new government tested the patience and obedience of the Mother Angélique and of her Sisters.

‘She (Angélique) suffered more than they on these occasions,

¹ *Ib.*, p. 430.

and, since she was in the habit of acting with much prudence and charity in all things, her mind as well as her heart was disturbed that matters should be undertaken with so little forethought, and that the Nuns should be exposed without necessity to all the mischances that may happen in a great journey during the worst season of the year, when one must travel almost as much in the dark as by daylight. She preserved silence nevertheless, being persuaded that her time for obedience, so long desired, had come; for she was then on the point of relinquishing the Abbey to make it elective, as she did the following summer. Thus she instructed the others by the great example which she gave them.

'Sister Marie Claire, whatever her sorrow, did not venture even to let it be seen by her tears. She said farewell to the Community without weeping; but, wishing it to be observed that she rendered this due to obedience, and that she did not feel it the less, she said on leaving them: "*You see, my Sisters, that I do not weep.*" As much as to say that she did all that could lie with her, and that she offered to God in silence the sacrifice of her heart broken with sorrow at such a parting.

'The roads were still so bad at the close of the winter, when they set out, that a thousand disagreeable accidents occurred; to the point that they were obliged to dismount from the carriage in a bad road at nightfall, each walking without seeing the others, so that one of the Nuns (Sister Angélique de Ste Agnès de Marle de la Falaire) strayed so far from her companions and was so lost that, but for a gentleman on horseback who met her and dismounted to escort her till she had rejoined the carriage, she would have been in peril of drowning and being killed, not to mention other mishaps from which God preserved her by this encounter, which might have been so dangerous and was so favourable.'¹

(The heroine herself has recounted this incident and begs the reader to 'conceive the feelings of a Nun, all alone for two *lieux* with a man'. In later retrospect, however, her escort, thought of gratefully as 'guardian angel', lost his terrible aspect).²

'The very day that they reached Dijon they thought they would be drowned, and they were all soaked when they entered the Convent whither they went. In this state they were well

¹ *Relation de la Vie et des Vertus de la Sœur Marie de Sainte-Claire Arnauld. Par la Mère Angélique de S. Jean Arnauld, sa nièce, Mémoires pour servir . . .*, vol. iii, p. 432 seq.

² *Relation de la Sœur Angélique de Sainte-Agnès de Marle de la Falaire . . . Mémoires pour servir . . .*, vol. i, pp. 411-13.

received, but directly after, Sister Marie Claire was taken to a cell to begin there a very close solitude and as it were a rigorous Novitiate, although this name was not given to it.

She was expressly forbidden to hold any communication with the Mother Agnès her sister, whom we have mentioned as sent to this Abbey the previous year, and who filled there the post of Prioress. She was forbidden even to speak to a single one of the Nuns of Port Royal who had come with, or before her, to that House, so that she found herself suddenly a stranger among persons unknown, whose spirit and customs were very contrary to her bent, and without any consolation whether interior or exterior. In the anguish of heart which she experienced, her ardent nature and the vivacity of her spirit and her feelings increased the suffering. For the more she loved all the persons from whom she now was separated, the more she suffered from this strange solitude, and the more she found contrariety among minds whom the temperament of the country and their maxims, even in respect of the spiritual life, rendered infinitely different from what she had seen all her life.

She continued a very long time in this distress, with so passionate a desire to return to Port Royal that she told the Mother Angélique shortly before she died, speaking of what she had suffered at that time, that she believed she had never made a greater sacrifice to God than when once she had offered up this intense desire of returning, with the resolve never more to think of it and to resign herself absolutely to His will. It was this abandonment of herself to God which alone calmed her distress. But, by a strange enough revulsion, she passed from this first repugnance to so great an esteem for the Conduct of that place, that it was afterwards an occasion for quite new suffering when she had to leave.

One will not however be astonished at her passing to such a contrary disposition when one considers the circumstances; and one may see that even her virtue contributed to the change. With perfect submission always for the opinions of the Mother Angélique, she saw that it was she who had entirely delivered over her and her House to the Conduct of the Prelate who did it all; so that, believing herself obliged to resign herself as she did, she condemned in herself all the repugnance which she felt, and directed all her effort to combat it until she came to the point of making the sacrifice told above, after which, not venturing any longer to turn her eyes to her native land, she strove to attach herself to the place of her exile. It became indeed easier for her in the sequel to habituate herself to it. For as the merits of the Mother Agnès had

led the Nuns to elect her as Superior from the very first year she was there, the yoke became very gentle to my Sister Marie Claire, when she had now to obey only a person whom she loved more than herself.

‘There still remained the customs and spirit of this House, very contrary to hers. But besides the fact that habituation took away some of the distaste, the austerity of the Conduct, favouring her bent for penance, reconciled her to their manner of life, and she was very glad to have more liberty to maltreat her body than the Mother Angélique had allowed her at Port Royal, her Conduct having been always accompanied by great discretion, because she strove rather to humiliate and mortify the passions of the mind, than to weaken the forces necessary to sustain the labour of the Religious Life. This other Conduct was the direct opposite ; for it held much by a certain exterior hardness and austerity, which obliged persons to take much upon themselves in seeking out devices of mortification in addition to the ordinary practices, with but little regard for their infirmities. But to sustain them under this rigour, of which nature soon would tire, much freedom of spirit was allowed, which compensated for this outward austerity.

‘My Sister Marie Claire remained then for over five years in this Monastery ; and in the meantime many things took place at Port Royal. It may be seen elsewhere what led the Mother Angélique to leave the guidance of this Prelate we have mentioned, and to place herself entirely under that of M. de Saint-Cyran, who was of opinion that the ancient Rule should be re-established at Port Royal and all the Observances, which had been changed under the previous government. Since these two opposed Conducts had brought division into certain spirits, because there were persons at Port Royal attached to the former, and in particular a Benefactress (Madame de Pontcarré) who greatly condemned this change and who was careful to inform the Mother Agnès and her companions in Burgundy by letter of all that took place in Paris, it was easy to prejudice them against it, in their persuasion of the enlightenment and piety of this first Director (the Bishop of Langres), and since they were totally ignorant of what had happened since their departure from Paris.’

When recalled, as narrated, Agnès and Marie Claire, with the other nuns from Port Royal, came accordingly full of regret and passionate prejudice. ‘They started out in this disposition, and the Mother Agnès did not conceal it from the Mother Angélique on her arrival in Paris, when she passed by

the *Maison du S. Sacrement*, where she (Mère Angélique) still was, to see her. But the Mother Angélique, who knew her spirit and her heart, did not distress herself; and assured her that it would not take long to change her mind when once she saw matters near to, seeing the enlightenment and uprightness she knew to be in her heart; and so it came to pass.

‘My Sister Marie Claire was more strongly prejudiced and had even confirmed herself against impressions she might receive from without, by her firm opinion that there was nothing holier and wiser than the previous rule of the Prelate, whom she placed in the first rank of the Saints, and believed accordingly, that whatsoever was contrary to it was a path of error. They had not seen him since their departure from Paris, so that his visits to Port Royal yet further fanned the zeal of these Sisters, and made them take sides in the disunion which had arisen between him and M. de Saint-Cyran; which began to form a species of party in Port Royal. This Lady Benefactress of whom we have spoken and certain Nuns, both among those returned from Dijon and among those who had not left Port Royal but who were attached to the Rule of the Bishop, were thus united in their criticism of the Conduct of their Superiors and of the whole Community, causing as it were schism and a manner of scandal. Never would my Sister Marie Claire have been capable of engaging in anything of the kind, had she not let herself be dazzled by a pretext of piety and zeal, believing that she owed to God this testimony of fidelity which she rendered to a person in whom she had up to then revered His authority, and whom she believed filled with His spirit.’

‘It is true that she observed at this time certain changes in the behaviour of this Prelate, which gave her some apprehension that his virtue was not of the same exaltation as she had held it in the beginning. But she satisfied herself by praying God ardently in these words, said secretly in her heart: *Non dabis Sanctum tuum videre corruptionem*. She would gladly almost have not heard her own prayer, and that God would nevertheless have granted it; such pain did she have at getting a glimpse of what she could not conceive might ever be. She cherished in her spirit the utmost she could the idea so strongly imprinted there of the enlightenment and usefulness of this Conduct, which she could not believe reasonable to abandon after so greatly esteeming it. Save for this point in which she was in error, and which led her into disunion with her Superiors, she was for all the rest in uniform submission; and,

although she wrote often to this Prelate and had like facility with the others to convey her letters to him without the knowledge of the Superior, by medium of this Benefactress, who had her own turnstile and her parlour, she never used it: but she carried them always to the Superior, knowing she owed it to obedience. But she was deceived in believing that she did not owe her a like submission on this other point, as regards which she thought she would have been wanting to God by lacking in fidelity to this former Conduct, which her Superiors themselves had held in such esteem.'

'Her outward behaviour did not change throughout that time. She appeared always equally fervent in practices of charity, equally attentive to prayer and equally remote from every kind of irregularity contrary to the duties of Religion. For she could not endure the liberties which some, who shared her feelings took on every occasion, diverting themselves with discourse injurious to the reputation of the persons whose Conduct they criticized, or testifying bitterness against them. As she believed she was defending a good cause, she desired to do so holily; but this, which showed her heart the less corrupted, served only to blind her spirit the more, and to blind also the others, who remained the more attached to her opinions from their esteem for her virtue.

'She suffered in the midst of it all inconceivable pain, and she would have been fortunate had it been for a good cause. No one has ever had a better nature or more affection, and we have seen already how she had been compelled to do violence to herself in order to moderate her extreme attachment for the Mother Angélique. She loved no less the Mother Agnès, at that time her Abbess; and she had in the House her mother a Religious, and her other sisters; all united under the Conduct to which she was opposed. Her heart was thus constantly torn, and she was amazed herself how she could live in the mental torment she endured; which caused her to cry continually to God, although she knew not what she asked in asking strength to suffer as long as He willed, since He might have answered her that He does not will the death of the sinner, but rather his conversion and his life. In effect He was preparing the means for hers little by little.

'For when this division had lasted fourteen months, the Mother Agnès, who was then Abbess as before said, judging that no remedy was to be hoped for this disorder so long as the Prelate's visits nursed these spirits in revolt, took the resolution of begging him to come no longer to Port Royal. Many human considerations had to be overlooked before coming to this point, in respect of a person with whom such engagements

had been taken. But it was better to pluck out the right eye than to suffer darkness to spread over the body and be occasion of scandal. She wrote to him accordingly to this effect with much respect but with great firmness, and at the same time she forbade my Sister Marie Claire and all the others to write to him.

‘It were to no purpose to tell what the sorrow and what the anguish of mind of my Sister Marie Claire, since the sufferings caused by error are vain sufferings and pains of sin. But what may show that God was, notwithstanding, hidden in the cloud in the midst of this tempest, is that she looked only to Him in her affliction, praying to Him ceaselessly and keeping watch upon her words, that none might escape her against God, and against the respect she owed to the persons who represented Him. This remedy, although violent, had not a speedy effect, and although my Sister Marie Claire no longer ventured to have any communication with the Prelate, she preserved in her heart the same adherence to his spirit and his maxims; which prevented her from savouring the Conduct of the House, even though, little by little, she could not hinder herself from seeing that it was much more conformable to the spirit of the Rule, and though she would readily have loved it had her heart been loosened from this tie which checked her natural impulse.

‘The Mothers, who saw no prospect of healing her, employed for her the most powerful of all remedies, as S. Benedict calls it, which is that of prayer, and God heard them. He put into the heart of M. d’Andilly, Sister Marie Claire’s eldest brother, who was greatly moved at seeing her remain always in this spirit of disunion, to speak to her with assurance and freedom; for up to then he had not done so. He had a first interview with her, which was without result, because she employed the whole force of her mind and of her mistaken zeal to guard herself against the impressions of respect and affection which might have undeceived her as to the opinion to which she clung so strongly. He returned eight days later, and although he spoke to her forcibly, he yet made no impression upon her spirit. Seeing this, an impulse came to him to tell her that he saw clearly what he asked of her was not to be brought about by the words of a man, and must needs be the effect of the all-powerful grace which the Holy Spirit pours upon the heart; that he begged her to kneel with him that they might together pray God to be pleased to speak to her heart. They did so, and remained the one and the other some time praying to God, who answered them so promptly that my Sister Marie Claire, when she finished

her prayer, found herself a new creature. She understood the danger of the state into which she had fallen; she testified her regret by her tears, and, as she desired to return to her duty by returning to the submission and union she owed to her Superiors, they were called; and, as they came to the same parlour, she flung herself at their feet and placed her soul again within their hands, asking their forgiveness for her revolt, and protesting that she submitted for the future to the Conduct of the House, and to all they might be pleased to ask of her.

‘In truth she continued thenceforth in this disposition; but it was as yet only the break of day; the sun had not risen, and there remained still in her spirit the shades of the past night. God disposed her little by little to enter the light of truth; and, on the day of the Feast of the Assumption, the Holy Virgin, whom she had all her life invoked in her troubles, obtained for her a change of heart so sudden and so complete that from that day she became a different person. She began to recognize and to lament the errors of her mistaken zeal with as much sorrow as though she had passed her life in most criminal disorders. For this reason she borrowed the words of the prodigal son to begin a letter which she wrote that day to the Mother Agnès her Abbess, in which she poured out her heart with her tears, to blot out all traces of her disobedience and of this blindness which had made her fight against the path of God and so holy a Conduct, because she was herself straying through the affection of her heart which would not let her see anything that might have enlightened her. For, even though she had returned to the submission she owed her Superiors some time previously, she had not failed to preserve in her mind the veneration she thought due, for fidelity’s sake, to the opinions and lights of her former Director.

‘But she began to make a more accurate discernment when truth had pierced the clouds which obscured her spirit, and from that moment no one appreciated better than she those holy maxims of penance, of which Saint-Cyran had given the first knowledge in this century, when the ancient discipline of the Church seemed wholly ignored, no one any longer speaking of it because they pursued a wholly different practice.’ (The allusion is to Saint-Cyran’s revival of the primitive Church practice of penitential abstinence for a time from Communion, a revival which, intended to honour the Sacrament, was easily represented as neglect and disparagement.) ‘While the division of Marie Claire and her companions lasted, it was this point of the Conduct of M. de Saint-Cyran which they most

strongly opposed, because it was that which the Prelate had condemned in his teaching. When, on the contrary, God had touched her, it was that to which she attached herself with greatest ardour and zeal. She entered upon movements of penitence so humble and so strong, that there was nothing which could slake her eagerness to give satisfaction to God. No sort of humiliation appeared to her great enough to repair the scandal she had given to all her Sisters, and every kind of suffering seemed to her too light for her to punish herself.

‘She wished thenceforth to place her soul in the hands of M. de Saint-Cyran, that he might teach her the ways of God, which she was already persuaded he knew better than any one; for this purpose she begged to make him a general confession. And, having been touched on the day of the Assumption of the Holy Virgin, she wrote to him on that of S. Louis, 1636, the following letter :—

“My Father, It was my intention to seal up the strong desire which was given me, while communicating on the day of the Holy Virgin, of placing my soul within your hands and of imploring you by the divine mercy to show me the paths of true penitence, because, recognizing how I had despised this grace in the time of blindness of my spirit and hardness of my heart, I saw myself unworthy of even aspiring to this benefit, and confessed before God that the privation was my desert. But I own to you, my Father, that the silence I had resolved to keep is impossible to me, because the movement which urges me to be converted permits me no delay. You are free to refuse me, but I am not free to withdraw; and you will command me to do so before I cease from importuning you. I have little hope of being received by you, and all manner of reasons lead me to fear that you will not burden yourself with so wretched a soul, one which in truth has no fellow in malice. Nevertheless, I do not wholly despair, because I know that the mercies of God are immense, and it may be that He will constrain you to do this action of extraordinary charity. I have some ground to hope in His goodness, seeing the condition from which He has drawn me. I look upon it with terror, and my whole life is so criminal that I should scarcely venture to hope for the grace of penance. I know that God can save me, but what obligation has He to work this miracle? I adore His judgement upon me with trembling and with tranquillity, and whatever it may please you to do, in consequence of this, with submission and reverence, desiring to remain, whatever it may be, my Father, your very humble and very obedient daughter and servant, Sister Marie de Jésus-Christ. This day of S. Louis.”

‘M. de Saint-Cyran remained for six months unwilling to grant what she asked, as much to test the soundness of the change as because he thought she would feel more freedom in telling some other than him all the difficulties she had felt on his account during the time of her disaffection. Her perseverance in asking this grace and awaiting it with humility, made him grant it. She saw M. de Saint-Cyran at the beginning of the year 1637, on the Eve of the Purification of the Virgin, all of Whose feasts seemed to be marked as days of grace for her; and, a few days after, she began her general confession with feelings of humiliation so profound and such great sorrow that, far from M. de Saint-Cyran requiring to persuade her of the necessity of atoning to God by a penance corresponding to the sins she had committed, he had to moderate the ardour she had to make hers public and as lasting as her life.

‘She asked, on this account, for the rank and habit of a Lay Sister to be granted her, in order to be all her life servant and last of the Community, and to expiate by work as well as by tears the scandal she had caused by her strife. She wore accordingly this habit for three months, and spent this time, a part of which was Lent, in the work of the kitchen, which was combined with that of fasting, of the watch she kept for two hours every night before the Holy Sacrament, and of several other bodily austerities which she accounted as nothing compared with the sorrow of her soul, of which it might be said: *Magna est velut mare contritio tua*; your sorrow is as great and as deep as the sea.

‘I know not if anybody ever believed himself more criminal and in consequence more subject to the justice of God. Notwithstanding that, M. de Saint-Cyran, who had heard her confession, had observed in her heart so much righteousness before God as to say of her: “he had been surprised at seeing in her so much inclination to sin without being able to see any falls.”

‘Her own feeling was very contrary, and she could see nothing in her life which she did not hold to call for tears. That came, in her, from the purity of the love she had always had for God, which made her feel the blindness into which she had fallen as a persecution she had offered to the truth, that is to say even to God, which she regarded as the greatest of crimes.

‘She was ill during these three months with a very painful fluxion which swelled her head and face extraordinarily. But after a few days, during which she was obliged to interrupt it in order to be cured, she returned to her work with the same ardour, and there is reason to believe that this fire would not ever have slackened in her, had she been permitted to

spend her life in this estate, since she left it, when obliged, only with much regret and in the hope that she might obtain from M. the Archbishop, Superior of the House, the permission she wished to ask, of returning permanently to the state of Lay Sister, which should be a monument of her penitence—the remainder of her life. But her Superiors did not share this opinion.

‘It will not be futile to preserve here what my Sister Marie Claire wrote down, with great care not to forget it, of the advice given her by M. de Saint-Cyran for her guidance at the time she made him her general confession. Such persons as have known M. de Saint-Cyran will recognize his entire spirit, his piety, his soundness and his disinterested Conduct, which led souls to God without permitting them the least trifling on the road.

‘The first time he saw her, he addressed her with these words: “I had neither wish nor intention of seeing you. I came with another purpose; but, on going to the Church, I felt myself impelled to ask for you. Your sole obligation for it is to God. To-day is the Feast of S. Ignatius, Martyr; he is a noteworthy Saint. Well, what is it you wish? I am here to heal you—show your wounds.”

‘After she had discoursed to him about the state she had been in, he said this: “It must be seen before God, if you have been truly what you make out. Sometimes extravagance carries the spirit to say what it does not believe, and to follow that which it does not approve. One must make this discernment.

“The external works of penitence must proceed from internal feeling, and there must be harmony between the one and the other. For one must beware of testifying more feeling outwardly than one has genuinely within.

“I praise God at seeing you return to Him in truth. It is a grace of which you do not sufficiently estimate the rarity; among a thousand souls not one returns. I believed you inconvertible. Had you died, you could have claimed no great share in Heaven. I give you these words: *Misericordias Domini in aeternum cantabo*. God has remembered, says the Holy Virgin, His mercy which He seemed to have forgotten four thousand years. He has remembered it to withdraw you from this dangerous life. In what you have been recognize what you are, and in your change what He is.”’

‘When she began her confession, he said to her: “God is a spirit, and the sins of the spirit offend Him much more than the bodily. Your feelings on this point are sound. Beware of exaggeration. There is more humility in confessing simply.

“There is no need of examination to remember sins of consequence; their impression is not effaced, because it touches the immortality of the soul. Stay before God without thoughts or words, He will understand you. I leave you with these words of the Gospel for the week: *The last shall be first*. In the first centuries sinners asked with extreme humility to be admitted to penance, and esteemed themselves unworthy even to approach the Priests.

“One must come alive to penance. That is the reason why I let you wait so long. I have let you live; for five months you have been living with spiritual life.

“The first break of dawn is called day, even though it does not eclipse the shades of night; even so the first spark of the true light which God sends upon a soul must be called grace, although it be still enveloped in the shades which sin brings with it.

“It is an extreme abuse to direct all souls alike; each soul must have its rule. Many things may be done without danger by innocent souls, which would be dangerous to souls wounded by sin, who, however cured by penitence, are not exempt from the weaknesses their wounds have left them. A soldier who has been dangerously wounded feels all his life, even though his wounds may be well healed, the change of weather, and, if he cares for his health, does not expose himself to fogs and snow, as another might do without peril. I cannot therefore leave you in your liberty of conscience, unless you desire me to deceive you like those who have attributed your troubles to other causes. I, who know your wounds, must heal them. I am the physician and must come to the remedy; it lies in the cutting-off which you desire. The path is narrow; it is deception to make it broad. In fine, it is the first rule of penance that whosoever has sinned in doing things illicit should abstain from those lawful.

“Let your penitence be accompanied by silence, by patience and by abstinence; I mean that of the spirit which bears separation from all things.

“I desire no sorrow that finds outlet in the senses; take heed to your tears. I desire no grimaces, sighs, or gestures, but a silence of spirit that checks all movement. Pray to God, and be God's without affectation . . . You are happy to be a Religious. If you were in the world, it would be difficult to make you do the penance which you need. But your cloister favours the purpose, and your cloister and the observance of your rules, practised in a new spirit, are the best penance you can do.

“The things which are obligatory must be accomplished before those which go beyond. You cannot have made me the proposal of penance in your paper without a movement of grace, and I must not answer you save in the movement of God ; I will refer it to Him.

“We will make you Lay Sister this Lent. In ancient days the habit was changed in Lent, which was the time of grandissime penance, done to prepare the Catechumens for baptism. You will be engaged in work but without excess, so that you may be able to persevere. It is contrary to humility to wish to do extraordinary things. We are not saints, to do as the saints. One must remain humbly in mediocrity, and live in a certain disguise which lets nothing be seen in us except what is ordinary. You will consider yourself the equal of the Lay Sisters in all things, only you will try to be the most humble.

“You will be the least of the House, to obey Jesus Christ, who warns us in the gospel, if we are called to a wedding, to take the lowest place. It is a wedding, is penance, to the which God calls you in His goodness ; you will take then the lowest rank there. . . .

“Preserve silence and solitude internal and external, so far as you can ; cut off every occasion of amusement and gratification, leaving, whenever possible, places where talk of the world has been entered upon, or diverting it if it be in your power.

“I am amazed at the mercy God has shown you. It is a marvel when one returns from such straying. You must praise God, and give Him satisfaction by penance. You are now in penance, and in a habit and estate which witness your purpose to perform it. You must speak to us now by actions. It will be sufficient to be what you are, and to persevere in the endurance of this estate with humility. In ancient days penitents changed their habits, and many who were innocent did the same by humility, mingling among the guilty ; and the Fathers said that penance was the remedy for the one set and the glory of the other.”

“As she had some distress at first under this change of estate, she acknowledged it to him, and he said : “I am not surprised at your difficulty. I should be so rather if it had not happened ; this must be so. . . . It is a wile of your enemy ; to withdraw you from your condition would be to favour his design. He is angry at seeing in lowliness a soul he wishes to exalt ; he fears lest its work, done for the sake of the painful works exercised by Jesus Christ when on earth, should bring it near to God. . . . When we have undertaken a work for God, advisedly,

one must continue it without minding one's difficulties, diverting one's mind from them by a better occupation. It is an ill-grounded subject for distress, that which absence from the Choir gives you; while not assisting at it, you are present there through the desire of the heart which God hears. . . .

“The Church ceases to sing *Alleluia* during the time of Lent, which is that of its penance, and, to do penance, you have broken off your customary singing. This privation must be endured patiently for penance. You are distressed because of a spirit who afflicts you, and I would wish you four to exercise you without ceasing; this endurance would make you fit for something. You, more than others, are pledged to tolerance, in view of the incomparable tolerance God has shown you. Suffer then all sorts of humours; work with joy and with so much gentleness that you may win spirits; it is a grace of the Gospel to make the wolf and the lamb dwell together; preserve peace, joy, and patience. Let your prayer be action; recall this verse: *Levavi manus meas ad mandata tua*. . . . Silence is the lot of penitents, and internal silence yet more than exterior.”

“Another time, to sustain her in another difficulty, he said to her: “One must forget the past. Had one to think of sins committed, none would be happy. I am in no way satisfied with a hope which suffices only to prevent despair; there needs one firm and constant in God, who is as infinitely gentle to souls who are in the true path, as He is infinitely terrible and rigorous to souls who follow a false one. He, Who has commanded us not to look back when once we have set our hand to the plough, does Himself what we must do; He does not look upon the past sins of a soul who seeks His Kingdom.”

“Were you to die at this hour, I would absolve you with joy, and should have as great hope of your salvation as I had ever of any one. The sins for which one does penance are forgotten by God.”

We may pass, yet more briefly than the niece Angélique de S. Jean, over the edifying tale of Marie Claire's further life, of her continued fidelity to the spirit of penitence, of her self-denial and her acts of charity. Suffice it to note, from another source, that our Mère Angélique found a fitting way to gratify her love for this younger sister, privileging her alone to share in such peculiarly painful tasks of sick-nursing as she ordinarily reserved for herself. And when,

after three years of this mortified but happy life, she fell ill to death of a dysentery, Marie Claire had thoughts only of God, and could die in tranquil peace with 'Victory, Victory' upon her lips.

Angélique de S. Jean, who tells the tale of Marie Claire, is full, it is evident, of sympathetic love for her penitent aunt, so excusably led into error, so amply atoning it. She herself, a child at the time in her convent, was, we read, greatly overcome at Marie Claire's death. Saint-Cyran, for his part, whatever his hidden regard for the candid uprightness of that soul, was far from palliating her offence. Had she died in revolt she would have had, he told her, small claim upon heaven.

The peculiar interest of the tale of Marie Claire, as regards the history of Port Royal, lies in the entrance of Saint-Cyran, in this close intimacy, upon the scene. Scarce elsewhere, and not at all in the nuns' narratives, have we so clear a view of this Saint of Port Royal. 'Fanatic' is the natural verdict of our human wisdom, thinking how excusably and with how pure a purpose, Marie Claire had sinned. Yet that we may not overrate the fanaticism, nor regard the culprit's remorse as all morbid, let us bear in mind that the offence was, unquestionably, a breach of a nun's supreme duty, observance of her vow of obedience to the appointed Superior, to her Abbess. She had helped to foster cabal and schism within her convent; later, as the statements of the rebellious nuns turned to the hurt of Saint-Cyran, she saw her offence in the light, doubly grievous, of a 'persecution of the truth'. Saint-Cyran, meanwhile, saw penance as a good in itself, the peculiar good which he desired to restore in the Church. 'The cure of sinners, it is the glory of the righteous,' he quotes from the Fathers; he respected, and had no wish to moderate, Marie Claire's thirst for that 'wedding feast'. A strain of fanaticism may not be denied him. Yet, more perhaps than any other reformer, Saint-Cyran calls forth the question, is not such fanaticism the logical outcome of Christian doctrine, of belief in human corruption and in the merits of vicarious suffering?

At least, Saint-Cyran's 'fanaticism' was tempered by grave tenderness, and, granted his premisses, by profound insight.

His treatment of Marie Claire, though it may seem disproportioned to her offence, was well adapted to fortify her clinging soul and hold in check her emotional excesses ;—or, to speak more accurately, to confine them to the safer ideal outlet. Nor may the sublimity of his faith be denied. To cite one last passage from his words to Marie Claire :—

‘ The souls which are God’s must have neither certitude nor foresight ; they must act by the faith which has neither clear light nor assurance in the continuance of good works ; they look to God and follow Him every instant, dependent upon the occasions His providence brings to birth. I should not desire to know what I shall do when I leave here. We are under obligation to ask our bread from God, that is to say His grace, only for each day, but I should like to ask it for every hour. A Christian soul needs an unparalleled and universal flexibility. It must know how to pass from rest to work, from work to rest, from prayer to action, from action to prayer,—loving nothing, holding by nothing, prepared to do everything, and prepared also to do nothing when illness or obedience checks it, remaining useless with peace and joy. There is benefit in the break, and often while working we are doing nothing before God.’

Two points in the advice of Saint-Cyran call for special note, as typical of his spirit and of the movement which sprang from him. First the profound care for sincerity. Heedless to moderate the penitent’s zeal, he is scrupulous to ensure, not merely the obvious sincerity that matches feeling with words, but depth of reality to the feeling. He is on the guard against emotionalism. The outlet of sighs and tears are denied her ; acts alone are the legitimate product of sorrow. And secondly, what we may call the duality of the movement. In it two tendencies, ordinarily centrifugal, worked to one end ; respect for authority and tradition, for the Church, shared the field with personal dependence on the direct voice of God. Saint-Cyran saw the remedy for the evil days on which he had fallen in a revival of the disused Church practices and the doctrine of the Fathers ; the Primitive Church is his guide and ideal as of any High Anglican ; but he waits like a Methodist for a personal impulse from God, before seeing or answering Marie Claire. He had one eye upon ancient usage, the other upon the incalculable

present movement of grace. To the mind of antiquarian and of scholar, Saint-Cyran added something of the soul of a prophet—of a fanatic if one will. The movement he set on foot was weighted with learning and borne up by authority—authority of the past against that of the present ; but its force was faith in the grace of God speaking, not through authorities, or to the Church, but direct to the individual soul.

CHAPTER XV

Saint-Cyran and the movement of reform springing from his influence.

WITH the imprisonment of the Abbé de Saint-Cyran the narrative of the Mère Angélique comes to a close, not indeed as terminating the tale of God's providence upon Port Royal, but because some press of occupation gave her an excuse for leaving it. Written as it was, not only amid the infirmities of age and illness, but against the grain, merely from 'obedience' and with a shrewd suspicion that her nuns desired it in order to commemorate her rather than to glorify God, it is a plain and restricted document, stating facts with little of the glow of fervour which seems to have attended her spoken words. Her indication of external accidents: the death of a friend, the exit of a nun, quarrels of Superiors, as evils prepared for the ultimate good of the convent, may raise a smile from the reader rather than convey to him the burning faith in the ever-present hand of God which was said to be her 'special gift'. In such partial providences rather than in universal laws, Port Royal saw the visible operation of the Deity; later, as persecution engendered sectarianism, the tendency grew upon the community to see all outside events in their bearing upon itself, elect band witnessing for the truth. In Angélique the tendency left unimpaired her breadth of heart and is but a small check to the full flow of her charity.

At least the profound sincerity that no less distinguished the Mother may be read in the quiet narrative, and we learn from it what were for her, looking back, the three great moments of her spiritual life,—the crisis of her youth, so happily ending in her 'conversion', her union with François de Sales and Mme de Chantal, and finally this union, in which her narrative culminates, with the Abbé de Saint-Cyran. The coil of error tangled by mistaken judgement on her part, by the backslidings of an ill-chosen Director, by ecclesiastical jealousies



JANSEN

From engraving of portrait by Philippe de Champaigne

and rival ambitions, had at length resolved itself into that supreme good.

The junction of the Mère Angélique with Saint-Cyran,—junction, as it proved, of her movement of conventual reform with a wider and far-reaching movement of reform within the Catholic Church,—was indeed the event truly momentous in the history of Port Royal.

About the same time that the young Abbess first gave her soul to reform and, with her Rule of S. Benedict as guide, sought, no new thing for her convent, but a revival of the ancient spirit and primitive discipline, the theological student Jean du Vergier de Hauranne, whom we know from his later benefice as the Abbé de Saint-Cyran, together with his friend and fellow student, the Fleming Jansen, turned his thoughts also to reform,—of no one House or single Order but of the whole Church. Jansen and Saint-Cyran looked too for guidance to times past and to authorities which, though neglected, were not denied.

At the close of their theological course, at Louvain and in Paris, these two friends retired (1611) to Du Vergier's home at Bayonne, to devote themselves to an indefatigable and exhaustive study of the Fathers of the Church. The fervour they brought to this study of Christian Antiquity has a parallel only in the earlier fervour brought by scholars to the revival of pagan literature. They spent twelve to fifteen hours a day at their books, their sole recreation the mild sport of kite-flying. Jansen passed whole nights, despite his delicate frame, in his armchair with a tome of the Fathers on the book-rest before him. 'You will kill this good Fleming,' Du Vergier's mother assured him, 'by dint of making him study.'¹

Among the Fathers, one assumed in the eyes of these enthusiasts a place of supreme authority. Jansen had drawn already, it would seem, a leaning towards S. Augustine from the University of Louvain, where the Augustinian teaching of Baius had recently flourished and recently been silenced by Rome.

Now as he read and re-read S. Augustine, all his works ten times and the treatise against the Pelagians some thirty,

¹ *Mémoires touchant la Vie de M. de Saint-Cyran, par M. Lancelot*, vol. i, p. 102 seq.

he fastened, he and Saint-Cyran, upon that Father as the bulwark *par excellence* of the Church, the doctor who had combated in advance, and against the Pelagians, tendencies actually undermining pure Christian doctrine. That doctrine was the total corruption of man, the impotence of his will, and the omnipotence of God's grace—sole agent for good. The modern Pelagians, the Semi-Pelagians to be exact, were the Jesuits. From their ranks had come Molina who, finding a place in the economy of salvation for free-will, allowed some merit to man and diminished in consequence his dependence upon grace, 'which bloweth where it listeth,' diminishing too the supreme part played by the Atonement. And, though Molina's particular philosophic explanation (he sought to reconcile, by a theory of pre-established harmony, those irreconcilables, man's free-will and the fore-knowledge of God) had been rejected by Rome and was disowned by the body of Jesuits, the tendency which had led to it remained—a rationalizing tendency strictly in unison, for the rest, with the general movement of thought. It was left to Protestant heretics—though in their ranks, too, the conflict raged between Free Will and Grace—to insist on the need for 'movements of grace'.

The Jesuits again, with their dominant purpose of reasserting the sway of the Church, dwelt above all upon outer conformity, tending to set in the rites of the Church an efficacy almost magical and irrespective of inner change, whether of 'will' or of 'grace'. In contrast to the moral laxity admitted under this system, Jansen and Saint-Cyran laid hold with fervour upon the early practices of the Church, with their close union between sacramental rites and moral discipline.

And again, seeking unity, the Jesuits saw the Church as concentrated in its head, the Pope (with their General by his side), and depreciated in his favour the power of subordinate Bishops. Opposed to this also was the view which Jansen and Saint-Cyran derived from the first centuries, of the Church as an Episcopal hierarchy; while duly acknowledging the Pope head of the whole, they exalted the sacred office of every Bishop and held the authority of each supreme in his own diocese. And above even the Pope they set the authority of the Church Councils and Canons.

In a revival of the pure days of early Christianity Jansen and Saint-Cyran saw the sole hope for the Church, fallen into decay in these latter 'dregs' of time. How far, or precisely when, they conceived any definite hope and purpose of bringing about such a revival, is uncertain. Jansen at any rate projected soon a great work, the *Augustinus*, which should familiarize the world again with the Augustinian teaching and crush the Molinists as S. Augustine had crushed the Pelagians; Saint-Cyran, continuing his study of the Fathers more generally, prepared to set forth again from them the pure doctrine of the Church on a number of points, whether to confute the heretics and schismatics,—in the matter, for example, of the Real Presence—, or to restore practices, such as those of penance and even the Sacrament of Confirmation, which had fallen into abeyance or were held in small esteem by the Church.

But coming late to reform, with the spectacle before them of schemes which had rent the Church and led to schism, with a recent example, too, in the case of Baius, of Rome's swift suppression of these dangerous topics,—all controversy between grace and free-will being then in fact under taboo—, they conceived their plans in all prudent secrecy. Reform became their life-purpose, but one to be executed only as occasion befell. They held themselves ready as instruments of the divine providence when it should be manifested, avoiding rather than courting all stir or open propaganda. They looked to small beginnings, words in season, personal influence, methods which the Jesuits stigmatized later by the name of cabal. The counsel of human wisdom was confirmed by their faith,—faith in the sole potency of God's grace, which alone, and when it pleased, would operate reform. Hence a part of their work was, through prayer and penance, to call down that grace upon the Church. As, in the revival of learning, blind respect for antiquity had led to the emancipating worship of what antiquity had worshipped, *nature*, so this reverential study of the Fathers gave a faith which, logically, should have lessened the weight of tradition, faith namely in the living voice of *grace*. Saint-Cyran waited upon the personal movement of grace as S. Augustine had waited upon it.

When the friends parted, after some fifteen months, it was

to follow accordingly the normal ecclesiastic career. Jansen distinguished himself at the University of Louvain, whither he returned, and became eventually Bishop of Ypres, in his native Flanders. He engaged on occasion in successful controversy both with the heretics and the Jesuits, but his main hopes were set on the *Augustinus*, which, though he completed it, he did not live to see published. He had meantime rendered himself obnoxious in France by a work, the *Mars Gallicus*, condemnatory of Richelieu's policy and of the employment of heretic troops in Flanders.

Saint-Cyran, for his part, assisted the Bishop of Poitiers in his diocese, and declined all preferment save the modest Abbey of Saint-Cyran in Brienne, by the name of which we, anticipating, already know him.

At the time of this close union with the Mère Angélique, Saint-Cyran was living in Paris, in the Cloître Notre Dame, devoting his mornings to study, still of the Fathers, and his afternoons to his neighbours—in his capacity as director of consciences. A quarter of a century had elapsed since his first deep draught of Christian antiquity, and the purpose of reform, still undeclared, was ripening still for fulfilment. A man now of middle age, he was highly esteemed in ecclesiastical circles, and his learning was admired without any dread of its subversive tendencies.

The times, for all the need of reform, were by no means times of stagnation. On the contrary, the early seventeenth century was, in France, a period of peculiar vitality in the Church, marked by reorganization at all points; a revival as vigorous as the social revival which marks that century of internal peace, succeeding upon one of civil and religious warfare. The witness still remains in the numerous institutions dating from that time: *S. Sulpice* for example, *S. Nicolas du Chardonnet* and its allied seminaries: most notable of all, *The Oratory* founded by the Cardinal de Bérulle: and again the *Missions* of S. Vincent de Paul, uniting a new spirit of philanthropy with the old one of religious zeal. Among women's Orders, the *Visitation* we have already seen founded by S. François de Sales, and the *Carmelites* introduced under the auspices of the Cardinal de Bérulle,—and these were but

the more notable among many communities established or reformed.

The Mère Angélique was far from alone, though she had been independent and isolated, in her work of conventual reform. Neither were Saint-Cyran and Jansen alone in their hope of new life for the Church, or in their recognition of its corrupt practices. Angélique herself, in her talks with her nephew, bears a noteworthy witness :—

‘In 1653, on the 26th of April,’ the nephew reports,¹ ‘as I was speaking to her about the life of M. de Genève (Fr. de Sales), she said to me : “This saintly Prelate helped me greatly and I venture to say that he honoured me with his affection and his confidence as much as he did Mme de Chantal. I was surprised at the freedom and kindness with which he told me all his most secret thoughts, even as I told him, and had told him from the first, all my own. It is certain that he was far more enlightened than has been supposed in regard to the government and discipline of the Church. His was a pure eye which saw all the evils and all the disorders brought about by laxity in the morals of Ecclesiastics and Monks. But he hid all in silence and covered all with charity and humility.

“He lamented, as did M. de Bérulle, the disorders of the Court of Rome, and pointed them out to me in detail. Afterwards he said : ‘My Daughter, here is matter for tears ; for to speak of them to the world in the state it now is, would cause scandal to no profit. These sick persons love their sickness, and do not wish to be cured. The Œcumenical Councils ought to reform head and limbs ; since they are certainly above the Pope. But the Popes are irritated when the Church does not bend wholly under them, even though, according to the true order of God, it is above them, when the council is called universally and canonically. I know this just as well as the doctors who publish it abroad, but discretion prevents my speaking of it, for I do not see any hope of remedy. One must weep and pray in secret that God may set His hand where man cannot set his ; and we must humble ourselves beneath the Ecclesiastical powers to whom He has subjected us, and ask Him nevertheless to humble and convert them by the omnipotence of His Spirit, and to reform the abuses which have slipped in as to the Conduct of the Ministers of the Church, and to send her holy shepherds animated with the zeal of

¹ *Entretiens* . . . avec M. le Maître, Mémoires pour servir . . . , vol. ii, p. 307 seq.

S. Charles, who may serve to purify her by the fire of their zeal and their learning, and to render her without spot or blemish in discipline; even as she is in faith and doctrine.' He took comfort in speaking to me, as I know he did also with Mme de Chantal, with whom he had united me as closely as is possible, without our having ever seen one another."

'The Mother Angélique added: "M. the Cardinal de Bérulle, intimate friend of M. de Genève, saw and deplored these same abuses of the Court of Rome, and conversed about them to M. de Saint-Cyran, who told me that he saw a marvellous degree of knowledge and discernment in this saintly man, and that they confirmed each other in the silence that the true children of the Church should observe at the sight of these internal ills and these intestine wounds, and that S. Bernard had pronounced them, five hundred years ago, to be incurable, that one must at least cover up the nakedness of one's mother, when one saw that one could not cure her of her maladies, and say even more in the present day what S. Gregory Nazienzene said only of his own times: *'We have nothing to give to the Church save our tears.'*"

"Likewise," she added, "M. de Saint-Cyran told me that they who truly love the Church should hide themselves in solitary places, in order to take no part in the passions of such as dishonour her holiness, and to pray for her in private. *She is our mother*, he said to me, *we must love her, we must pity her, we must aid her, we must weep for her, and not scandalize and vex her by an excess of zeal which is not sufficiently humble nor sufficiently prudent.*"

In desire for reform, François de Sales was doubtless at one with Saint-Cyran; in the wish to avoid open scandal, in view of heretic onlookers and scarce-healed dissensions, Saint-Cyran was in accord with François de Sales. Always the Mother Angélique delights to bring out points of agreement, in thoughts as in character, between these two Fathers of her spirit. But beneath the agreement there was as surely great difference, difference of emphasis and final aim. The one, lamenting, resigned the matter to God and adjusted his energies to existing conditions; the other, equally looking to God, yet saw himself as God's instrument and, in whatever silence, held himself always braced for the task of reform.

Outwardly, however, and in relation to the Cardinal

de Bérulle and other innovating spirits, Saint-Cyran must have appeared as a man lacking a scheme for the good of the Church, rather than as one dangerous in his zeal.

At the very date (1611) of Saint-Cyran's retreat with Jansen for the purpose of study, the Cardinal de Bérulle, M. Vincent de Paul and a third ecclesiastic, M. Bourdeoise, had met together, so the story goes, to consult with prayer as to the best means of revivifying the Church. De Bérulle saw hope in a union of priests of learning and distinction; Vincent de Paul in popular missions; M. Bourdeoise in restored discipline among the clergy, with whom, so purely secular had the estate become, even the distinctive dress had fallen into abeyance. The Oratory, the Missions, the Seminary of S. Nicolas du Charbonnet, were the outcome.¹

'It seemed,' a young seminarist, Lancelot,² who passed into the hands of Saint-Cyran from S. Nicolas du Charbonnet, wrote of its founder M. Bourdeoise, 'that God had sent him, him and certain others who appeared at almost the same time, to clear away what was grossest in the clergy, while he meantime made ready M. de Saint-Cyran to come and show us that *more excellent path*, to borrow the Apostle's words, which he had discovered in the Holy Fathers and in all Antiquity. For one may say that it has been his peculiarity to set forth in all their light the most sound truths, without the which all done for external reform is almost without fruit.'

Here we have struck the distinctive note of Saint-Cyran among these reformers.

Friend of the Cardinal de Bérulle, friend and supporter of Vincent de Paul, admired for his learning by M. Bourdeoise, Saint-Cyran for his part had propounded no new scheme. His hopes were set on no external reform; or rather he hoped, not to work from external change a change in spirit, but from change in spirit to restore to its pristine glory the face of the Church. It was unsuspected in the clerical world that his learning, his unrivalled mastery of the Fathers and of Church history, covered a purpose of reform reaching far beyond any single community; that, though he

¹ Cf. *Sainte-Beuve : Port-Royal*, vol. i, p. 9 (fifth ed.).

² *Mémoires touchant la vie de Monsieur de Saint-Cyran. Par M. Lancelot*, vol. i, pp. 3-4.

broached no new thing, he aimed at a return to things old, more foreign by far to the actual trend of the Church. Our seminarist Lancelot gives us the picture of Saint-Cyran as he was seen then in clerical circles, the learned ecclesiastic patent to all, the enthusiast and reformer veiled, and yet his presence stirring in receptive spirits something of suspense and expectancy. The movement was preparing, though underground as it were, and obscurely.

Lancelot, dissatisfied at S. Nicolas du Chardonnet with the teaching of the excellent M. Bourdeoise, which dwelt mainly on externals, could not bring himself either to enter the priesthood or to 'return to the world':—

'I was as a man cast up by the sea on the shore of some island, where he awaits the ship to come and take him off. Young though I was, as God had given me grace to seek him solely, so His goodness willed also that I should take more pleasure in acquainting myself with certain works of the Fathers of the Church, than in reading the devotional books of the day; and I said sometimes to those who were being trained with me, and who have since reminded me of it: "There are no more such men," alluding to S. Chrysostom, S. Ambrose and S. Augustine and the rest; "and if there were but one, I would depart this very instant and would go in search of him, even to the end of the earth, in order to throw myself at his feet, and to receive from him so pure and salutary a guidance."

'For the space of ten years this thought never left my heart, so that, although these Messieurs of S. Nicolas did all they could to attach me to them and make me take Orders, I nevertheless could not resolve upon it. . . .

'As I sought constantly the means of giving myself more particularly to God, I desired to become a Religious; and, not knowing where to go, I cast my eyes upon the Jesuits. I did not know them, but I had read some Lives of their early Fathers which had moved me; and, after having preserved this desire for five or six years, I became a Postulant by advice of my Confessor at the close of my classes of humanity in the year 1634. God diverted this blow by an act of His providence which would take too long to relate. . . .

'About a year after that an Ecclesiastic of merit took up his abode at S. Nicolas. God had given him such knowledge of the principles of S. Augustine, that the late M. de Saint-Cyran,'—Lancelot wrote these memoirs long after Saint-Cyran's death—

'sometimes said to me he had seen nobody who had entered better into the doctrine of this holy Doctor : which was saying much for those days. This Ecclesiastic was received at S. Nicolas in so strange a manner that it seemed as though God had sent him there only for me. Also from the moment I saw him, although I had never known him and was myself only a pupil, such a union was formed between him and me that I think a holy and civil friendship could not go further. M. Bourdeoise himself encouraged this union without meaning it; for, since his humility led him to communicate to me all he did, he desired me then to discourse to this Ecclesiastic about a little work he had given me to revise; and this occasioned the said person to speak to me with great frankness.

'Considering then the spirit and Direction of M. Bourdeoise, who assuredly had much zeal but who sometimes lacked enlightenment, he said to me: "I see well that the spirit of this good Priest is a little exterior, and that he sets all in words. He conceives that it is only necessary to urge a man hard in order to convert him." "He does," said he, "for morals what Father Veron" (an ex-Jesuit, curé of Charenton) "does for the errors of the heretics: they both believe that one has but to scream loud." "I know well," he added, "that all the Conduct of the day leads to that; but it is not that of S. Augustine, which God has given me the grace to appreciate; and I scarcely know at the present day any who has really entered into the whole truth save one man." I asked him: "Who is that?" He replied: "*It is the Abbé de Saint-Cyran.*"

'These words were as an arrow which on the very instant pierced my heart, and from that time I had so great a veneration for M. de Saint-Cyran, and so great a notion of his virtue and merit, that I believe it reached its height at one stroke and has never since been able to receive any increase, although, as is known, I have had more veneration for M. de Saint-Cyran than for any mortal man, and have always looked upon him as a Saint upon earth. 'Alas!' I said to myself, 'here is he whom God long since pointed out to me: one must leave all to go and find him, were it to the end of the earth'.

'I afterwards asked this friend how he knew M. de Saint-Cyran; he replied he had never seen him, and judged of him only by what he had heard; but that he saw clearly from his principles that he was a second S. Augustine, that he possessed all the doctrine of the holy Fathers of Antiquity, and that he was the first man in existence for many centuries of the Church.

'The truths concerning grace, Christian justification, penance,

and vocation to the Ecclesiastical estate were so little known at that time, and the greatness of S. Augustine so obscured with the general run of men of letters, that M. Froger, Curé of S. Nicolas, one of the most celebrated Doctors of the Sorbonne and of oldest standing, who passed as an oracle in Paris, did not even possess his works. Thus the comparison of M. de Saint-Cyran with S. Augustine did not make sufficient impression upon my mind. As I had read some Letters of S. Jerome which had pleased me, I thought of measuring the idea he had given me of M. de Saint-Cyran with that which I had of this holy Doctor. I said to him, amusingly enough: "Is he as learned as S. Jerome?" This was the question of a schoolboy, at which he might have laughed. However, he did not, and replied gravely, "that he would compare M. de Saint-Cyran to S. Augustine rather than to S. Jerome. He is," he added, "more learned than S. Jerome in his mastery of theology, that is to say, of the basis, the sequence, and, so to speak, the system, of Christian doctrine. No," he added, "I know none save S. Augustine to whom one can compare him." I responded: "You surprise me; I saw him at dinner here on the occasion of the first Mass of one of his friends, but he did not say a word. It is true that, after the visitors had gone, M. Bourdeoise said to us that he was one of the most learned men of this century; but I took that as the praise often given to such as have some merit above the ordinary, without conceiving that of this Abbé to be at the point you set it."

'Thereupon I saw my friend take fire as I had done myself previously. "What," he said to me, "is it possible? Does M. de Saint-Cyran come here? Does M. Bourdeoise know him? You must procure me by his means a visit to him; it will be the very greatest pleasure you ever could give me." I promised I would; and in effect I pledged M. Bourdeoise to take him to see M. de Saint-Cyran, who was living then in the Cloître Notre Dame, and to make them acquainted.

'Since I was very young, I did not deem myself capable of profiting by their interview, and I did not venture to ask to be of the party; but I preserved always in my heart this great veneration which God had given me for M. de Saint-Cyran, with the firm resolution to come and fling myself at his feet so soon as I had finished my studies, of which there remained still the two years of Philosophy. God began then to recompense the goodwill He had Himself given me, causing M. de Saint-Cyran, by an extraordinary marvel, to serve me already, without knowing me, as father and guide in the way of salvation.

'This friend came two or three times a year to Paris, and

did not fail to go and pay his respects to M. de Saint-Cyran. I was very careful to learn from him afterwards what had passed at their interview ; and that served me as sustenance until another journey, for I turned over frequently in my heart that which my friend had told me of this great servant of God, without saying anything about it to any one. Sometimes, even when M. de Saint-Cyran said nothing to him, and did not reply to the questions he had put to him, we did not fail to be edified as much by his silence as by his discourse, because one saw that charity governed all his movements, and that, if he did not reply, it was because time and the dispositions of the persons did not seem to him apt for speaking of certain matters. Thus, admiring his holiness and his prudence, we judged from his reserve what he had in his heart, and we asked of God the disposition necessary for benefiting from the instructions of His servant. Making accordingly these reflections, we judged of our defects by the comparison we drew with his virtues. We recognized the feebleness of the greater number of the men of these latter days, by the slight proportion they bore to the weightiness of his thoughts, and we were more and more inflamed with desire to approach him and know him.’¹

This preparation of spirits for the teaching of Saint-Cyran, so naïvely related by the simple-hearted seminarist, fell in the years (1635-6) which saw the final triumph of Saint-Cyran at the *Maison du S. Sacrement* and Port Royal. We have seen how his ascendancy over the nuns brought down upon him jealous calumny and the enmity of the supplanted Bishop of Langres. Presently the young Lancelot passed, from S. Nicolas du Chardonnet, under his charge, and in consequence ill-feeling was aroused on the part of M. de Bourdeoise, who lost thus a favourite pupil, and of the community.² A third spiritual conquest, not of nun or pious seminarist, but of a man in

¹ *Mémoires . . . par M. Lancelot*, p. 5 seq.

² ‘Durant tout ce tems-là ces Messieurs de la Communauté de S. Nicolas et M. le Curé firent tout ce qu’ils purent pour me dégoûter de M. de Saint-Cyran, et pour m’attacher d’eux . . . M. le Curé me dit un jour, parlant de M. de Saint-Cyran : “C’est un homme dangereux ; et si vous n’y prenez garde il vous perdra :” mais tout cela faisait aussi peu d’impression sur moi que sur un rocher.’ *Mémoires . . . par M. Lancelot*, vol. i, p. 24.

full professional career and well known in the Paris world, made a wider stir and roused more powerful jealousy. In the year 1637, M. le Maître, our Mother Angélique's nephew, eldest son of the one married Arnauld sister, renounced a successful and distinguished career at the bar to enter, under the influence of Saint-Cyran, into a strict and penitential retreat—to become, in fact, first of the recluses of Port Royal.

CHAPTER XVI

Saint-Cyran's relations with the Arnauld family.—M. d'Andilly.—M. le Maître.—The first hermits of Port Royal.

THE Abbé de Saint-Cyran had become Director of the *Maison du S. Sacrement* by the unworthy medium of the Bishop of Langres, and the complications of the affair of the *Chapelet* had secured the path for his influence. But the roundabout way of human error, so skilfully manipulated by providence to a happy ending, had led only to a result which a simpler train of events and a direct human purpose had been preparing.

Long previously, Saint-Cyran had come into touch with Angélique's family, with her eldest brother, M. d'Andilly, and with her mother. He had already, on occasion of the transference to Port Royal des Champs of the thirty Maubuisson nuns, turned his thoughts to Angélique herself, recognizing in her the spirit of true Christian charity and already perhaps seeing in her an apt instrument for the revival he had at heart. He expresses, somewhat enigmatically, his regret that he was not himself an instrument in the renewal her signal act of charity would bring about in her convent. Some passages from the letter he then wrote to her may show his spirit. The familiar matter of Christian ethics, blind trust in providence and scorn of human wisdom—elsewhere frequent synonym for idle self-indulgence—is presented here in its sublimity :—

‘I like nothing so much as to see that, amid all the great precautions and anxieties of the world, pleasure is taken in doing violence to the wisdom and prudence of the human spirit, in order to rest upon God. . . . God has an excellence raised so far above the highest thoughts of our intellect and of our faith, that it is serving Him basely to run no risks in the practice of charity. Remember only that in the first centuries of the Church all Christians testified to Him their love no otherwise than by dying, and that, failing martyrdom

and occasions of losing our life for Him, the least we can do is to embrace with joy the opportunities which He occasions of testifying our love and the zeal of our charity, by doing good to His poor. . . . It may be that at His judgement He will not actuse us of not having searched out all opportunities . . . and of not having taken the trouble to look for the poor who languish in caves and woods that we may feed them. But what He will assuredly reproach us with, is neglect to provide for the needs of those He Himself presents to us. . . . There is nothing which shows so clearly that our faith is slumbering and that our charity is dead. . . . I will render to you, not of myself, but through Him Who sacrifices Himself every day in my hands, more than equal return of the prayers you shall make for me, which can have force and efficacy only as they draw it from His divine sacrifice. . . .¹

Saint-Cyran had heard of the proposed act of charity while visiting Mme Arnauld. His first and particular friend in the Arnauld family was M. d'Andilly—so called from that country property which Angélique had found so delightful in her girlhood, at the moment of keen sensibility preceding her 'day of grace'.

This eldest brother makes a first appearance in the annals of Port Royal on the momentous *journée du guichet*, inveighing then with youthful and quite secular wrath against his sisters who presumed to shut out their father and to quote the 'councils and canons'.²

Now, *ami par excellence* of M. de Saint-Cyran, his ardour was directed to bring about a union between him and his own now revered sister Angélique. His success, we saw, was only partial. Saint-Cyran visited first Maubuisson and then Port Royal des Champs, as Angélique tells in her narrative:—

'I have had the happiness,' she writes in 1626 to her brother, 'to possess M. de Saint-Cyran five days, which seemed to be moments. How much I owe you for having given me a share in the holy friendship of so incomparable a friend! I say truly, my very dear brother, incomparable for the holy truth with which he is filled, and for the sincerity and greatness of his affection; and all this in an *excellantissime* intellect. You had told me so, and experience has made me see it. It is impossible for you to be deceived in that quarter, notwith-

¹ *Mémoires pour servir* . . . , vol. i, p. 211 seq.

² Cf. *ante*, p. 24.

standing the excess of your good-heartedness (which sometimes gets the better of your judgement), for in this soul there is too much candour and truth. I pray to God he may give as much to all your dear friends.'¹

Nevertheless, from very respect for his weight and learning, Angélique did not ask from Saint-Cyran the personal guidance she desired. And he, with his customary reticence, waited to be asked, or for a clear guidance of providence—which did not come until after, as we saw, the convent had been committed to the Bishop of Langres.

But, though M. d'Andilly was not to be the chief instrument of Saint-Cyran's union with our Mother Angélique, it was through him that Saint-Cyran's influence spread over the male side of the Arnauld family. Their friendship was the root whence sprang the community of the Messieurs of Port Royal.

At first sight, M. d'Andilly would seem a strange friend for the austere and reserved Saint-Cyran. The Arnaulds were divided—they themselves made the distinction—into hot and cold Arnaulds: Robert d'Andilly, Angélique, and the youngest Antoine (the 'fiery doctor', at this date not yet completing his studies) belonging most notoriously to the 'hot'. They drew their impetuous blood from their father the advocate, while Agnès, Anne Eugénie and Mme le Maître took after their mother in serene equanimity. But the impetuosity of this eldest son was above all of the heart, and betrayed itself in the warm-heartedness and quick attachments, which, as Angélique wrote to him, sometimes outstript his judgement. He was carried away, not by moral indignation, but by charitable zest, believing too readily in virtue and excellence. His expansive nature found a vent, too, in enjoyment of matters, innocent truly, but by no means purely spiritual, and it won him favour and popularity at the Court, and from the Queen, Anne of Austria. Connected early, through his uncles, with the Council of Finance, he held successive good posts. He was at one time Superintendent of the Household of *Monsieur*, and, though he suffered temporary disgrace under Richelieu, he was made army-intendant during the wars with Spain. The

¹ *Lettres de la Mère Angélique*, vol. i, p. 29. Cf. also p. 21.

vigour and zest which he brought to temporal affairs, his hearty enjoyment of things mundane, of the favour of the great and of the good offices he himself could render to his friends, are amply reflected in his Memoirs. His zeal for such service was not quenched, though Saint-Cyran wrote to him sublime words,—‘However small a man may be, he is too great to be any one’s servant, save God’s only.’¹

D’Andilly’s virtue was truly, Saint-Cyran remarks, not that of an anchorite or a saint, but the experienced Director added: ‘I know no man in his circumstances who is more soundly virtuous.’ And, whatever glamour the Court might have for him, d’Andilly was ready always to risk disgrace for his friend and for the truth; was ready also later, advanced in life, but with a long span of vigour still before him, to quit the Court at his friend’s bidding.

The friendship dated back to 1620, when the two—d’Andilly in attendance on the Court, Saint-Cyran engaged in diocesan duties—had met at Poitiers.² It was thus already of long standing, confirmed by time without loss of warmth, in these years (1635–7) at which our history of the convent has arrived. And now, through their friendship, the influence of Saint-Cyran reached to the younger branch, to the sons of the only married Arnould sister, Madame le Maître.

The occasion was the illness and death of d’Andilly’s wife. Saint-Cyran attended the deathbed as priest; among the assembled relatives was Antoine le Maître, eldest of the nephews, a man of twenty-eight, who had achieved already brilliant success at the bar. As this nephew listened to the words which Saint-Cyran addressed to the dying woman, all his success and his reputed eloquence became to him vanity. The death of a cousin, his contemporary, about the same time, confirmed the effect. He renounced his career and, placing

¹ v. *Maximes Saintes et Chrésiennes, tirées des Lettres de Messire Jean du Verger de Hauranne, Abbé de Saint-Cyran*: 1703, p. 52, ‘L’homme, quelque petit qu’il soit, est si grand, qu’il ne peut, sans faire tort à sa grandeur, estre serviteur en ce monde que de Dieu seul.’

² Cf. *Mémoires de M. d’Andilly, au sujet de Messire Jean du Verger de Hauranne, Abbé de Saint-Cyran*. Vies . . . de Port-Royal, vol. i, pp. 31–2.

himself in Saint-Cyran's hands, turned all his thoughts to live, as that Director should advise, wholly for God.'¹

At the moment of this 'conversion', Antoine le Maître—he too was one of the hot Arnaulds, vehement and impetuous in his enterprises—was thinking, not of retreat, but of marriage. He had written on the subject to the Mère Agnès, apparently with full-winged enthusiasm for this project also, and for the lady. But the Mère Agnès, who was at the time absent at Dijon, had sublimer hopes for this eldest and favourite nephew. She replied with coldness; then, by a far-fetched turn of her mystic fancy, feigned to believe his words bore reference to a higher marriage;—

From Notre-Dame of Tard,
June 11th, 1634.

'MY VERY DEAR NEPHEW,

This is the last time that I shall make use of this term; by as much as you have been dear to me, you will be indifferent: since I have no longer response in you upon which to found a peculiar friendship. I shall love you with Christian, but universal, charity; and, as you will be in a very ordinary estate, so I shall bear you a very ordinary affection. You desire to become a slave and at the same time to remain monarch in my heart; that is not possible; for what relation is there between light and darkness, or between Jesus Christ and Belial?

'You will say that I blaspheme against this venerable sacrament for which you have such devotion; but do not distress yourself for my conscience, which knows well how to separate the holy and the profane, what is precious from what is abject, and which, after all, excuses you with S. Paul; rest satisfied with that, if you please, without asking of me approval and praise. But, while writing thus, I re-read your letter, and, as though awakening from deep sleep, I perceive I know not what light in the midst of this darkness, and something of hidden and mysterious in the words which appear so clear and so commonplace. I begin to question whether this tale of your love affairs, which you narrate at such length, without considering that I have no ears to hear such discourse, may not be an enigma drawn from the parables of the Gospel, where there is so frequent celebration of marriage, and one in particular

¹ Cf. *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de Port-Royal*, par M. Fontaine, vol. i, p. 31 seq.

to which only virgins are summoned. By the little ray of light that now appears to me, my mind expands and sets to work to explain your words, and to behold with a better eye this admirable girl who has ravished your heart. You say she is the 'most beautiful and the wisest in Paris; and you should say in Paradise, since she is sister of the angels. Oh! how beautiful she is, *la chaste génération avec clarté*, and how wise!'—and so on into the particular circumstances of the case. The girl's mother had been oppressed, was therefore the Church &c.—'But how shall I interpret that this girl's father is so perfect that only two other persons equal him? Must one then rise even to the bosom of God to find there in the unity of His essence a plurality of persons that have nothing of more or of less, being equally divine, or to speak more truly, equally God the one as the other?'¹

Unjustified as her attitude at the time and irritating as it was to M. le Maître,—his provoked response drew down upon him only a second similar letter—, events as we see confirmed her prophecy. There is in truth always a basis of common sense in our nuns, who could accept well enough the 'more ordinary' estate of marriage in their friends and relatives; the loftier hopes of Agnès for this nephew were grounded probably on some earlier show of piety. We read as a fact that, before taking to the bar, M. le Maître had had thoughts of the priesthood. These sudden conversions have usually some such antecedents, obliterated though they may be and forgotten in view of the more dazzling moment.

M. le Maître's impetuosity once awakened to the vanity and danger of his calling—('it is very difficult' he observes, 'in this estate to be so scrupulous as to refuse help to a friend, and once resolved to serve him, one makes things appear innocent which are not, and one renders what is black white, by artifice as it were and the charm of one's speech')²—, he could brook no delay. 'He exposed to M. de Saint-Cyran all that was passing in his heart. He told him that he was resolved to quit the world and all his hopes, in order to think for the future only of serving God in penitence and in retreat; and that, from the moment he was speaking, he bade farewell to

¹ *Lettres de la Mère Agnès Arnauld*, vol. i, p. 38 seq.

² *Mémoires . . . par M. Fontaine*, vol. i, p. 30.

the Courts, and begged him to aid in this design and assist him with his counsel.' ¹

In the memoirs of Lancelot, seminarist as we saw him, and afterwards noted teacher in the schools of Port Royal, we have the careful record of Saint-Cyran's life and sayings. With equal candour, and yet more exuberant *naïveté*, the doings of the hermits of Port Royal, and among the rest the great renunciation of M. le Maître, are recorded in the memoirs of another teacher in their schools, the simple-hearted *Fontaine*. He gathered his knowledge of it from M. le Maître's own lips as, a young lad, he waited upon '*ces messieurs*'.

'M. de Saint-Cyran was at first rejoiced at what he heard. His clear-sightedness nevertheless made him foresee the great consequences of the matter. He saw that they would not fail to recoil upon himself, for he knew how great the reputation of M. le Maître, and that the distinguished persons with whom he had to do might well be annoyed at being deprived of him.

'However, he thought only of the new convert, and collected all his judgement to direct wisely a matter of such consequence. He therefore advised M. le Maître to do nothing in haste, and to postpone the execution of his design until the vacation, as S. Augustine had done in a similar case. He represented to him that this would make much less stir; that he would irritate people much less by breaking with them, not abruptly, but more quietly; that only a little time remained for him, as for that Saint, before he would recover full liberty; that he should avoid doing himself the honour of so exactly declaring his purpose; and that it seemed to him much better that he should lend his voice still to his ordinary profession, while awaiting peaceably the day which should release him in fact from an employment from which God had already so happily released his heart.

'M. le Maître yielded in truth to so wise a counsel, but he has since told me that during that interval, all occupied as he was with his new resolutions, he found it impossible to recover the same fire he had had previously. He fixed his eyes upon a crucifix, all dusty, which he could see while he was pleading, and which up to then had never caught his attention; and he said that, looking at it, he was more disposed to weep than to speak.

'This was all at once observed by those who listened to him; and M. Talon, the Advocate-General, who was secretly

¹ *Mémoires . . . par M. Fontaine*, vol. i, pp. 32-3.

jealous of M. le Maître on account of his great renown, said to his friends that this time, instead of pleading, he was but dozing. This was repeated to M. le Maître who, piqued at the remark, spoke eight days later, so he told me, and with such force that never had he had more fire and vigour. He kept M. Talon always in view. He turned, while speaking, only in his direction; his body ever on the stretch, his arm continually extended, continually on tiptoe, his eye constantly fixed upon him, as being the last effort he would make, and resolved to quit then and there, to make to God a sacrifice of this rare talent, and to render for the future mute a voice which was the admiration of all France.’¹

The cynic may smile, not at the picture of the impassioned and overstrained orator alone, but at the final spurt of vanity and self-esteem. M. le Maître could renounce his career, but he must needs carry with him into retreat his reputation without blemish.

When the vacation ended, M. le Maître was looked for in vain at the Courts:—

‘The Courts opened, and he was not seen. He was inquired for on all sides, and could not be unearthed. When his absence began to be recognized, all the *Palais* seemed in mourning; and they could not make up their minds to believe what they saw with their eyes. The report spread all at once from the *Palais* throughout Paris, and from Paris throughout all France.’²

Our narrator saw the world, beyond his immediate happy confines of Port Royal, with vague and inflated vision. But the stir and annoyance caused by the noted barrister’s retreat were genuine, if scarcely moving France; and curiosity was fanned by the mystery and apparent inconsequence of the change. The ardour of the penitent did not carry him to monastic vows, nor to the priesthood, where his eloquence might have found a new sphere. He retired quite simply into absolute privacy, hiding in the midst of Paris from his friends, for the purpose of prayer and penance, as only a few years before Descartes had hidden for the purpose of unbroken study.

¹ *Mémoires . . . par M. Fontaine*, vol. i, p. 31 seq.

² *Ib.*, p. 35.

In this retreat M. le Maître was joined almost immediately by the second brother, M. de Séricourt, a young soldier who, in consequence of escape from imprisonment and near peril of life, turned now to consider eternity and the dangers attending his soul.

The place of retreat, a mystery to the gossiping world, was Port Royal of Paris, our convent in the Boulevard S. Jacques. Madame le Maître, their mother, who, though unable yet to take vows, made there her residence, wearing *le petit habit blanc*, caused a little house to be built for these sons upon the road-side of the convent, a tiny annex, of course duly separate and shut off from the nuns.

To these fraternal penitents Saint-Cyran added presently one or two young men who had sought at his hands guidance as to the best manner of life, and as main employment he gave them the education of some children, a little nephew of his own and the sons of a friend. From this modest beginning sprang the famous schools of Port Royal.

Our acquaintance Lancelot was among these youths, and tells the tale of his union, through Saint-Cyran, with these first hermits. We cannot better visit them than in his company:—

‘On the morrow of the Octave of the Epiphany, January the 14th, held as the feast of S. Hilary, I went in search of M. de Saint-Cyran . . ., but he was not in his apartment. I returned the following day, when the feast of S. Maur, who may be looked on as the Father of all the Religious in our France, is celebrated. As I still did not find him, I was sent to look for him at Port Royal where he was. I went there at once, and, when I asked for him, he happened by good fortune to be engaged with M. le Maître and with M. de Séricourt his brother, who had taken up their abode in the little dwelling built by their mother Mme le Maître, on the day of S. Paul, the first hermit, that is to say only four or five days previously. These gentlemen had the goodness, although they saw nobody in the world, to beg M. de Saint-Cyran to make me come in. I was escorted thither accordingly, without knowing where I was going. When I entered and saw persons of such modesty, who received me with so great an effusion of joy, I suspected something, seeing well that there was a certain atmosphere of charity quite out of the common. At once M. de Saint-Cyran took me and led me to the side of a very humble bed, upon which he

made me sit beside him, to talk to me. I perceived there was only a stuffed straw mattress. I saw likewise that all the rest of the furniture consisted only of some books and some cane chairs; and I was confirmed in the thought that I was undoubtedly in the room of him' (M. le Maître) 'whom I wished so much to discover. I said so to M. de Saint-Cyran, who acknowledged it, and promised to receive me, adding, however, that I must wait three days longer until he knew whether to place me with himself or at Port Royal with these *Messieurs*.

'I went down with him; and, as we were in the court, he said to me that, although he had some reputation of learning, I must not come to him with the idea of acquiring knowledge; and that perhaps he would not make me study. Then he added: "Look at S. Hilary, whose feast was kept yesterday; he was the cleverest man of his times, and yet he did not make a scholar of S. Martin."

'These three days over, I returned in search of M. de Saint-Cyran and I had his definite word that he would place me at Port Royal, the Mothers having given their approval, while M. le Maître professed very kindly to desire it. I was obliged, however, to go back and take leave of the Messieurs of S. Nicholas who, for all their annoyance at my departure, could not but approve my conduct. Having thus taken leave of them on the 20th of January, 1638, I reached Port Royal close on five in the evening. The Feast of S. Agnes had already begun, and we said the Matins at night, for which reason I have taken her also for my patron-saint. There were then only M. Singlin and M. Gaudon senior, to whom M. de Saint-Cyran did me the favour of uniting me. M. le Maître and M. de Séricourt were in another dwelling, where they lived separately, each in his room, like the Carthusians, and we saw them only at night, when we all assembled in the room of M. Singlin to say Matins. We began them at one in the morning, so as to be finished when the Nuns began. M. de Séricourt was at the pains of waking us. We sang the *Te Deum* out loud, and repeated the rest chanting it in a low voice.

'M. de Saint-Cyran took extraordinary consolation in seeing this little number of persons who had no other thought than of serving God in spirit and in truth, at a time when this grace was so rare; and considering the marvels of God and the miraculous manner in which he had gathered us, the one on this side, the other on that, he did not scruple to say that it was one of the greatest marks of predestination. Nevertheless, M. Gaudon did not persevere and returned to the age, by a judgement which we must resign to God, Who desired

perhaps to show us thereby that in whatever state we may be in this world, and whatever grace we have received from Him, we have always occasion to fear.

‘But at that time all was joy among us, and our hearts were so filled with it that it appeared even upon our countenances. On which matter, before passing on, I must recount a detail that concerns me. The abundance of favours with which it pleased God to load me, and the peace with which He filled me, were so great, that I could scarcely keep myself from laughing on every occasion. I did not know how to account for this change, besides that it had not previously been my chief defect. I accused myself of levity and often confessed for it; but M. de Saint-Cyran, who was very enlightened, saw well that this effusiveness had some other source; and he told me at length that I must not be confused because of it, and that sometimes the soul, considering the path it has followed, whence it came, where it was, and all that passed in it, felt so transported that it could not contain itself; that he believed my joy came from this ground rather than from levity, and that I must not be unduly troubled.

‘I recognized that he spoke truly, and that in truth I had never before been at such a feast. For God, according to the word of the Apostle, so ordered all things for my good and for my edification, that I could not sufficiently marvel at the greatness of His mercies. I was extremely touched by the charity of M. le Maître, the gentleness of M. de Séricourt, and the humility of M. Singlin; but above all the very edifying poverty of the Nuns enchanted me. For often they had not a quarter of an *écu* to send to market; and, rich only in virtues, they led a life all heavenly, in so great a remoteness from the world, that their House was scarcely known and hardly anybody came to it.’¹

¹ *Mémoires . . . par M. Lancelot*, vol. i, p. 32 seq.

CHAPTER XVII

Imprisonment of Saint-Cyran.—Retreat of the recluses to Port Royal des Champs.

FOR but a brief period did the little band continue their orisons at the gate of the convent undisturbed. The subsequent year (1638), the various grievances—the ‘persecution’, Port Royal finds the ennobling term,—against Saint-Cyran gathered to a head. The Bishop of Langres had written a memoir against him, accusing his ‘new practices’, that of setting an interval of penance between confession and absolution in particular, as smacking of heresy; the Abbé de Prières and others had exaggerated in loose talk his statements as to the early Church and the Canons. A more powerful enemy, Richelieu’s confidant, Père Joseph, had a grievance similar to that of the Bishop of Langres. He had entrusted the *Filles du Calvaire*, whom he directed, to Saint-Cyran during an absence from Paris, to find on return that his own influence there was diminished; the nuns ‘had tasted the difference between a Director given wholly to God and one who divided his allegiance between God and the world’.¹ The enmity of the Jesuits was another factor, not yet clearly defined, in the accumulating ill-will. Now this retreat of M. le Maître roused a fresh enemy in high places, the Chancellor Seguier, offended in the extreme at the loss, for no apparent reason, of a brilliant protégé. And since the convert fell into none of the established ranks of the Church, became neither monk nor priest, it was natural to attribute to his adviser some deep design, heretical probably and subversive of order.

The converging murmurs came to Richelieu only as fuel to suspicions already alive. Already he had his own grievances against Saint-Cyran. The general grievance, in the first place, that he had upon him no hold. Saint-Cyran had walked, it would

¹ Racine, *Abrégé de l’Histoire de Port-Royal*, ed. by A. Gazier, 1908, p. 23.

seem, for many years among his fellow ecclesiastics known only as a man of piety and learning ; but by Richelieu the force hidden behind his reserve had at once been noted. The two had met long before, Richelieu not yet minister but simple Bishop of Luçon, Saint-Cyran engaged in assisting the Bishop of Poitiers. Both then and later Richelieu sought to win Saint-Cyran, offering him preferment—a succession of bishoprics it is said¹—, paying him signal compliments. ‘ You see, gentlemen,’ so he once introduced him, ‘ the most learned man in France.’

Saint-Cyran’s learning, in effect, and his views of church government, might well have proved serviceable to Richelieu in certain phases of his policy towards Rome. But Saint-Cyran, desirous of reinstating the dignity of the episcopal office in view of the usurpations of Rome, was equally careful to avoid playing into the hands of the State and to preserve the Church from royal encroachments. The Mère Angélique cites an instance :—

‘ At the time when the Cardinal de Richelieu was offended with Rome because the Pope had made him angry, and wished to prevent the sending for Bulls to Rome, it happened that my brother, now the Bishop d’Angers, was elected Bishop of Toul canonically by the Chapter of which he was Dean, without having taken any steps whatsoever in the matter. M. de Saint-Cyran said to me that my brother was the one Bishop in France who might, since he had been elected by the Chapter in accordance with ancient rights, let himself be consecrated without sending for Bulls from Rome, and that perhaps the Cardinal might induce him to do it ; but that he held he ought not to do so, and that, at the actual juncture, such a proceeding would create a scandal, which prudence and Christian charity bound him to avoid.’²

Saint-Cyran’s ‘ Gallicanism ’ was in fact of a kind no more acceptable to Richelieu than to the Pope. His ideal was not that of a Frenchman *quâ* Frenchman, of the patriot glad to keep out foreign influence and retain for France the revenues

¹ *Memoires . . . par M. Lancelot*, vol. ii, pp. 162–3. For a more exact statement of the facts, cf. *Mémoires de Godefroi Hermant*, now in process of publication, vol. i, pp. 64–7.

² *Entretiens . . . avec M. le Maître*, *Mémoires pour servir . . .*, vol. ii, p. 310.

of the French Church, but of the churchman who, independent of nationality, saw the Church as a hierarchy of Bishops, the Pope merely their chief. In no wise did he wish the Church, thus conceived, to be under the hand of the State.

He let fall accordingly every offer of preferment from Richelieu and, retaining independence of action and liberty of criticism, could not long steer clear of offence in his eyes. The temper that saw the meanest man as 'too great to be any one's servant' was one incompatible with Richelieu's policy.

Particular points of offence soon arose. Saint-Cyran, alone of the divines consulted, disapproved the divorce, pressed by Richelieu, of the King's brother, the Duc d'Orléans. Again,—and this was the given ground of arrest—, Saint-Cyran differed from Richelieu on a point of theology, the matter of *contrition* versus *attrition*.

Under cover of these technical terms, and in this question raised by theologians, lay already the germ of disputes to take full wing in the *Lettres Provinciales*. The immediate point, on the wide moral horizon there opened, was whether the minor degree of repentance known as *attrition*—repentance, that is, moved only by fear of hell—sufficed for absolution, or whether the sinner required also *contrition*, sorrow in which love of God played also some part.

Richelieu had maintained in a *Catéchisme* the more lenient view, that attrition sufficed. At this present juncture a Father of the Oratory, the Père Seguenot, published a work in which the need for contrition was maintained. Richelieu sent the author to the Bastille, and Saint-Cyran, on charge of complicity, to the Château de Vincennes.

Saint-Cyran denied all share in the work, which indeed went a step farther than he approved, and, maintaining that the priest *pronounced* only and did not *confer* absolution, overpassed the line so delicately drawn between the early Christians and latter-day heretics. But the charge came near enough home to give him the joy of 'suffering for the truth'.

Lancelot narrates the arrest :—

' On Ascension-day M. de Saint-Cyran came again to say Mass at Port Royal ; and not having been able to see me on the eve as usual, for he never heard confessions on Feast-days unless

from actual necessity, he had the goodness to ask me that day if I wished to confess ; to which I replied I saw nothing particular to tell him. *Well, so much the better*, he said, *for one should not be too rigorous as to confession*. He gave us the same day three addresses, imitating the Son of God who, seeing the hour approach when He should be seized, made to His disciples longer and loftier discourses ; as was afterwards imitated by the Apostle S. Paul when he passed by Ephesus and, foreseeing what was to happen, summoned to Miletus the Priests of that church and the neighbouring Bishops.

‘It appears that M. de Saint-Cyran had some presentiment of his arrest, for speaking that same day to M. le Maître he said to him : *To-day all goes well ; but I will not answer for to-morrow*. In the evening, as, where he lived, he always caused a chapter of Scripture to be read, the passage of Jeremiah was chanced upon : *Ecce in manibus vestris sum ; facite mihi quod bonum et rectum est in oculis vestris*. And he added, *That is for me*.

‘In effect, by two in the morning his apartment was invested by the Archers of the Guard. They seemed to have been given the same distrust of M. de Saint-Cyran that Judas had given to the Jews in respect of Jesus Christ, for, as though they feared he might escape them, they came twenty-two in number, and placed sentinels on all sides even to the neighbouring gardens. But since they saw that nothing stirred in this house, which was a house of peace and of prayer, they came at six o’clock and knocked at the door to ask to speak with M. de Saint-Cyran.

M. de Saint-Cyran was at that actual moment reading S. Augustine with his nephew, and having lit upon some passage dealing with contrition, which was the pretext for oppressing him, he said again : *There is something for us, something to defend ourselves with if we are attacked*. Thereupon enters the Captain of the Guard, and, after greeting him with much courtesy, told M. de Saint-Cyran in a low tone that his orders were to make him enter a carriage which was waiting. M. de Saint-Cyran replied that he submitted willingly to this order ; and, without appearing in any way surprised, he took him pleasantly by the hand and said in a firm voice : “Let us go, Monsieur, wherever the King commands ; I have no greater joy than when opportunity to obey him is afforded.” He asked leave only to put on his cassock, for he was only in his dressing-gown. Then he said to his nephew, *M. de Barcos, will you come ?* M. de Barcos replied, *Very gladly, Monsieur*. But the Captain said, *Oh, Monsieur, my orders are for you alone*.

‘Thus the uncle and nephew parted, and M. de Saint-Cyran entered a carriage escorted by a portion of the Archers, the

others remaining to guard the house, while as yet it was not known where he was being taken, no one as yet having dreamt the Cardinal de Richelieu would employ such great violence as to throw into a rude prison a person he had honoured with quite special esteem.

'Some believed he would be taken before His Eminence, to acquit himself of what was alleged against him; others thought before the Chancellor, to receive orders to leave Paris; others said that such a number of Archers might well be to take him to the Bastille, others said to the Bois de Vincennes, and these latter proved right.

'It was a Friday, May the 14th, 1638, the day after the Feast of the Ascension. The day of this Feast, M. d'Andilly had come to bid farewell to M. de Saint-Cyran, before leaving on the morrow for his house at Pomponne; and on his way thither, by good fortune, he met him in the park of Vincennes. I learnt from M. d'Andilly himself that a certain Gilleton, who was in his service, was the first to perceive M. de Saint-Cyran in the carriage and, when he said so, M. d'Andilly replied: "You are mistaken, I saw M. de Saint-Cyran yesterday, and he did not tell me of any journey he had to take in this direction." The Guards had reversed their cloaks, which was why he was not seen to be a prisoner; so that M. d'Andilly, as yet without any suspicions, went up to the carriage, and, seeing that it was in truth M. de Saint-Cyran, said to him gaily: "Where are you taking all these people?" M. de Saint-Cyran replied with equal joyousness: "It is they on the contrary who are taking me. I regard myself the prisoner of God rather than of men. For the rest," he added, "they are in such haste that I had no time to take any book." M. d'Andilly had then in his hands the *Confessions of S. Augustine*, and said to him: "Look, here is one which you once gave to me, I must return it you." Afterwards the Captain of the Guard, who was a friend of M. d'Andilly, had the courtesy to let them converse a little.

'Thus, after M. d'Andilly had received certain instructions as to his affairs, greatly praising God for this fortunate meeting, they mutually agreed that M. d'Andilly should pursue his journey, that nothing should seem affected. They embraced as though they might never meet again, and M. de Saint-Cyran was escorted to the Château and put in the Keep.'¹

The seizure of Saint-Cyran was followed by the dispersal of the hermits at Port Royal. It was reported unseemly that men should thus cluster on the skirts of a convent. Calumny did

¹ *Memoires . . . par M. Lancelot*, vol. i, p. 56 seq.,

not spare the nuns, but for this time they were protected by the Archbishop, who averted from them a threatened royal inquiry and, himself visiting the convent, reported of them favourably. 'We are such good women,' Angélique writes with irony, 'if we are to believe all that is said of us.'

The hermits for their part, at the happy suggestion of Angélique, betook themselves from Port Royal in Paris to the deserted convent of Port Royal des Champs. They were now ten or twelve in number, the three remaining sons of Madame le Maître having joined the household at the gate. Of these, two are of no special note, nor did they in the sequel prove of more than respectable, and married, virtue; but the youngest, M. de Saci, destined from childhood for the priesthood, became the Director and the prop of Port Royal in later days of stress.

At this time, M. Singlin, Confessor already appointed by Saint-Cyran to the convent, was the mainstay alike of nuns and hermits. Up to the time of Angélique's death he filled this place, representing Saint-Cyran in the convent, and inspiring awe as well as affectionate respect. The imperious-natured Angélique trembled before this unassuming priest. And yet it is characteristic and befits his modesty that our narrative may pass him by with slight notice. He was the animating heart rather than a prominently active member of the community, the regulator of consciences that held all true and in unison.

In M. Singlin we touch on the democratic strain in the movement, upon a second point of affinity with methodism, where personal advantages and human learning are set at naught in view of spiritual grace. He was of obscure origin—son of an unsuccessful wine-merchant—, insignificant in person and without learning; he had passed from trade to the priesthood, encouraged by S. Vincent de Paul, and hastily acquiring the bare modicum of Latin. Acquaintance with the profounder teaching of Saint-Cyran was followed by a long abstinence from the functions of priest and by retreat into the then real solitude of Port Royal des Champs—deserted by the nuns and not yet peopled by hermits. But, no more than S. Vincent de Paul, did Saint-Cyran see in the mere absence of learning any disqualification for the priesthood; and, recognizing in the obscure and

modest Singlin, who asked nothing better than a hidden life of penitence, the gift, akin to his own, of insight into character and power over souls, he made him, however unwilling, Confessor in his own place at Port Royal.

M. Singlin it was who marshalled the hermits in retirement to Port Royal des Champs.

‘We departed then’ (from Paris for Les Champs), Lancelot narrates, ‘at Pentecost, some before, some after the Feast. M. le Maître and M. de Séricourt continued to live in the country as they had in town, dwelling and taking meals apart like the Carthusians. As for us, we had meals in common, together with certain children under our charge. We said Matins at night all together; the other hours were kept privately, and each practised in the abundance of his heart the holy instructions which he esteemed himself happy to have learnt from the mouth of M. de Saint-Cyran.

‘Since the site of the Abbey was in those days very unhealthy, because the place was a wilderness and the waters had no outlet, we were made to ascend the slopes towards evening to take the air, and we used to repeat Compline. M. Singlin sometimes made us sing out loud, that the mingling of our voices might better testify the joy of our hearts, and that God might publicly be praised whilst the truth was thought to be held captive in the person of him to whom we were indebted for all the favours God was pleased to show us.

‘We spent thus some months in a life all happy and full of charity, where the sole care of each was to make progress towards God and to give himself wholly to Him, after having set in oblivion all creatures. . . .

‘But the enemy of peace could not longer suffer so sweet and holy a union. He took umbrage at a manner of life so closely resembling that of the early Christians, where everybody had equal consideration, where help given to persons was regulated by their needs and not by outer considerations, and where all things were ordained by the zeal alone of charity and by contempt for the things of the world. He held it a shame to allow the merit of M. de Saint-Cyran to triumph in the person of those whom God had given him, while he was endeavouring to overwhelm it in his own. He persuaded the Cardinal to disperse the sheep after having smitten the shepherd, for fear lest the purity of our morals and of our life should be the apology of him whose conduct he wished to blacken. Accordingly the resolution was taken to make us depart from this holy spot and to disperse us. M. de Laubarde-

mont, Master of Requests, was sent for that purpose, and he came twice in one day to interrogate us. The second time he questioned even the children of eight or nine years of age ; upon which subject I would write at greater length had not the industry of the Jesuits, who have had their examination printed, anticipated me.' ¹

Neither must we dwell in detail upon these events, for the reason that we are concerned primarily with the nuns and with ' *ces messieurs* ' only in so far as their acquaintance is essential to the knowledge of Port Royal. Briefly be it said that, dispersed, they found each a separate refuge with sympathizing friends and remained one in spirit however scattered. And never was that work of training children abandoned, the several pupils moving with their respective tutors. Presently this first storm blew over, and hermits and pupils alike reassembled at Les Champs.

¹ *Mémoires . . . par M. Lancelot*, vol. i, p. 109 seq.

CHAPTER XVIII

Antoine Arnauld.—The 'Fréquente Communion'.—Increase of the Hermits.

SAINT-CYRAN'S imprisonment lasted five years, until 1643, when the death of Richelieu facilitated his release. That minister would listen to no word in his favour. 'Do you know,' he replied to an intercessor, 'of what man you are speaking? He is more dangerous than six armies. Look at my Catechism there on the table—I say in it that attrition suffices with confession, and he, he believes that contrition is necessary. And in the marriage of Monsieur, all France gave in to my wish, he alone had the temerity to oppose it.'¹ And again, 'Had only Luther and Calvin been taken in such good time, we should have been spared all the troubles.'

To no one more than to Saint-Cyran was the comparison with Luther and Calvin unpalatable. But his imprisonment did not check that movement of reform, so carefully distinguished from schismatic revolt, of which he was main author.

Nor indeed was his own activity checked. His prison was a field for the small beginnings which promise to the eye of faith a wide fruition; he taught the child of his warder, the mother in return exercising his humility and patience by petty thefts and tyrannies; he found means of showing charity to his fellow-prisoners. Neither was the wider sphere of influence shut off. Though kept in strict confinement, Saint-Cyran continued to write, in pencil and on scraps of paper, an infinity of letters, continuing thus his work as Director of souls. The penitent Marie Claire, at Port Royal, made it her pious task to copy fairly out these letters, as they passed through the convent.

In this manner Saint-Cyran's influence extended now to the youngest member of the Arnauld family, to Antoine, *le grand*

¹ *Mémoires de Godefroi Hermant*, vol. i, p. 82.

Arnauld. This youngest of the family, Angélique's *petit frère*, as she alludes to him in early letters, her junior by twenty years, was now at the entrance only of theological study, to which he had turned from the law. His young ambition was to become doctor of the Sorbonne; having obtained it, he was to win the more glorious honour of expulsion from that body 'for the truth's sake'.

Saint-Cyran directed the student to the works of S. Augustine, and Antoine Arnauld became at once, even in his thesis for a degree, the champion of the Augustinian doctrine of grace, rousing from the first the disfavour of his regular teacher. His pen was soon employed in a more open arena, and matters of reform were brought forward on a side which concerned and interested the general public—the side, namely, not of theological doctrine or of church government, but of daily practice and discipline. Arnauld's work, *De la Fréquente Communion*, written under the influence of Saint-Cyran in prison, is the first great landmark in the controversies between Jansenists and Jesuits. Thenceforth all minor and individual grievances against the Directors of Port Royal became merged in the enmity of the Jesuits; and the strife took definite shape as one with that powerful Order.

The *Fréquente Communion* is the precursor of the *Lettres Provinciales*; it appealed as they did to the public conscience, and it produced an effect inferior only to that produced by the more illustrious work. It took up the combat openly for those practices of penance, of penitential delay before absolution, the advocacy of which had been one article of offence against Saint-Cyran; and it stirred again the burning matter of contrition *versus* attrition.

The book appeared in 1643, the year of Richelieu's death and Saint-Cyran's release, and was in answer to strictures passed by a Jesuit upon Saint-Cyran's conduct of souls.

One of the ladies of the Court, Madame la Princesse de Guémené, and her conscience, was the slight cause that led to the work. The princess, hitherto given to vanity of a pronounced and even scandalous type—the Cardinal de Retz gives her measure¹—, came at this time, through the medium

¹ v. De Retz: *Mémoires*, ed. Regnier, vol. i, pp. 129-32,

of Arnauld d'Andilly, under the influence of Saint-Cyran. 'Grace was in her,' recognized that man of insight, 'as a flickering spark upon a frozen pavement,'¹ a spark which not many years resisted the wind of vanity. D'Andilly, with his wonted enthusiasm,—the greater, his worldly friends suspected, when the penitent soul was lodged in a fair body—, conceived great hopes of this Court beauty, and even for a moment inspired Angélique with the same. The gay creature, young, beautiful, and in perfect health, had moved d'Andilly to compassion by her remark that she could conceive no happier estate than her own, and had in her turn been impressed by his answering wish to transfer her health and beauty from her body to her soul. Saint-Cyran, appealed to by d'Andilly, did what he could to preserve and fan the flickering spark of grace, giving her from his prison a paper of rules for her guidance.

Madame de Guémené, obedient to his teaching, abstained from a ball on the eve of Communion. Her friend, Madame de Sablé, surprised at this abstinence, compared with her notes as to their respective Directors. The instructions given by Saint-Cyran were shown to the Jesuit who guided Madame de Sablé; the latter's reply, strongly advocating contrary views, in its turn passed to Saint-Cyran. The Jesuit went so far as to say that 'the more a person lacked grace, the more diligently should he partake of the divine food', and, in general, maintained the external, as it were magical, virtue of the Sacraments, irrespective of inward change.

Arnauld, that he might not seem to be hitting in the air, took this reply accordingly as his text, though without naming the author or source; and made his work at once an attack upon current practices and an exposition of the practice and doctrine of the Fathers, Canons and Councils.

With the *Fréquente Communion*, the quarrel took on shape and full proportions. Thenceforth it was war to the death with the Jesuits. They led off with an error in tactics. For they declaimed with such fury against the work, from the pulpit, as greatly to excite public curiosity, and it was in large measure due to their sermons that the first edition sold out

¹ *Lettres de Saint-Cyran*: ed. 1648, p. 2. (Letter to the Mère Angélique.)

in a fortnight.¹ A second promptly appeared, explaining the attacks by stating the source of the writing and opinions in view. The most violent of the Jesuit preachers exceeded too all measure and, having insulted the several bishops and archbishops who had approved the book, was compelled to make amends by a manner of public penance, the practice of which, Port Royal historians are careful to observe, he had turned to ridicule in his sermons.

Neither, in this matter of the *Fréquente Communion*, were the Jesuits more successful at Rome. Their influence with Mazarin, the more formidable Richelieu being dead, obtained an order from the Queen Mother for Arnauld to answer at Rome for his book. But the order brought the Sorbonne up in arms, and also the Bishops, in defence of Gallican liberties, and Mazarin was fain to apologize, on the score of ignorance, for the step taken. Arnauld thought it more prudent not to venture his person in Rome. His work, however, was examined, but neither Cardinals nor Pope would condemn it. The Jesuits abided a more favourable occasion for venting their wrath.

Meanwhile the work had an effect far deeper than the rousing of curiosity. It touched the serious conscience of the nation and brought many penitents to Port Royal; some to the convent, yet more to the hermits.

We have many tales of the serious spirits touched thus to penitence; of *M. le médecin Pallu*, first of several physicians who at Port Royal varied penance with charitable practice of their skill; of the Bishop of Bazas who, after a retreat with *ces messieurs*, converted his palace into a seminary and led in his diocese a life truly apostolic; of others again who served in the work of teaching at Port Royal, or in literary and even humble manual labour. They are narratives of a more varied interest than those of the nuns, but again lead us too far from our convent.

Complementary to the several abbesses, won by our Mother Angélique to lay down an ill-gotten dignity, there were priests who, under this influence, voluntarily resigned the cures upon

¹ *Mémoires . . . par Lancelot*, vol. i, pp. 240-1.

which they had too lightly entered and duties for which they felt themselves unworthy. A most notable case was that of the curé of S. Merri in Paris, M. Hillerin, who was an amiable *bon viveur* with hearty enjoyment of social intercourse among his parishioners, but who, awakened to a higher understanding of his office, resigned and entered into retreat under guidance of M. Singlin.¹ His successor, M. du Hamel, made the parish of S. Merri an active centre of reform and strait Christianity.

Again, whole families came under the influence, and then both convent and community of *Messieurs* gained recruits, the daughters sent for education to the one, the sons to the other—enlarging the bonds of human kinship already, with the Arnauld family, so strong a support to spiritual union. The family of Du Fossé at Rouen—they, however, previously touched—provided thus nuns for the convent and sent three boys to be taught by the *Messieurs*. The youngest boy, the sole who survived, has left invaluable memoirs, their worth impaired only by the common failing in Port Royal memoirs, of prolixity,—recording with zest in his old age his boyish impressions of the hermits and his school-days. He was already at Port Royal des Champs when the effects of the *Fréquente Communion* began to be seen :—

‘The extraordinary blessing which God shed upon the book, *De la Fréquente Communion*, was apparent in the conversion and retreat of a great number of persons, who renounced the world to come and confine themselves within the solitude of the Abbey where we dwelt. We saw the arrival from diverse parts of persons of diverse professions, who came like travellers in danger of shipwreck at sea, saving themselves as best they could upon a plank, to the port whither the almighty and merciful hand of the Lord conducted them.’²

There was *M. de la Rivière*, converted from Protestantism, a soldier, ‘and esteemed according to the world a gallant one,’ who took charge of the woods. *M. de la Pétière*, again, was *un lion plutôt qu’un homme*, but turned all his fiery energy to practical service and penance. *M. Pallu* built himself a little house as retreat in the garden :—

¹ Cf. *Mémoires . . . par M. Fontaine*, vol. i, p. 6 seq.

² *Mémoires de Pierre Thomas, sieur du Fossé*, ed. 1876, vol. i, p. 121.

'After having long practised medicine for the princes of the blood royal in view of gain and temporal honour, he made it his glory to practise it for the poor in order to gain Heaven which, as Jesus Christ declares, is theirs. But at the same time he thought chiefly of healing the wounds of his soul and his spiritual maladies, by the penance to which he consecrated himself with the others who dwelt in this spot.¹

'He had built (in the garden of the Monastery) a dwelling small but very neat, which was afterwards called *le petit Pallu*, both because of the smallness, very precise and compact, of its rooms, and because of the figure of its master who was small in every respect except in wit: little body, little dwelling, little horse, but all well shapen, well proportioned, and very agreeable. "Mon Dieu! who would not have loved this good recluse? One almost rejoiced at falling ill," observes the elder youth, Fontaine, "in order to have the pleasure of enjoying his visits."²

Fontaine and Du Fossé, in their memoirs fresh with young interest, people for us with graphic images the 'desert' of Port Royal. One last hermit may alone detain us, late comer to retreat though first in discipleship to Saint-Cyran.

Saint-Cyran left his prison (1643) only to die after a few brief months of reunion with his friends. To the *ami par excellence*, M. d'Andilly, he now bequeathed his heart, attaching to that precious legacy the condition that the possessor should enter into retreat, that d'Andilly should crown his virtuous life in the world by a final renunciation of even his innocent pleasures there. The head of the Arnauld family took leisurely and cordial leave of his friends at Court and set his affairs in order, establishing one son in his property of Pomponne, and another, M. l'Abbé Arnauld, who has left memoirs, in an ecclesiastical career. (The sons, we may note, M. l'Abbé in particular, found him less generous to them than to the community of Port Royal, which henceforth was his own absorbing interest.) Already the convent was the home for all his daughters. Two had died there, the third we know as Angélique de S. Jean, and two still younger were growing from convent children into nuns. One son, again, former page to Richelieu, was among the early hermits.

¹ *Ib.*, p. 124.

² *Mémoires par. . . M. Fontaine*, vol. i, p. 302.

With the advent of this veteran, sixty-three years of age, but full of vigour and gusto as a boy, retreat at Port Royal assumed an aspect of more material happiness. As d'Andilly had adorned his social life with benevolence and sound virtue, so he tempered his penitential retreat by innocent enjoyment and agreeable occupation. His was the care especially of the gardens. Improvement of the deserted convent grounds had already been begun by M. le Maître and his comrades,—M. le Maître, warned in a dream to care for this property of the nuns, had turned to manual labour with such characteristic zest that M. Singlin had to recall him to the primary end of retreat, the penitential care of his own soul. M. d'Andilly, ripe in practical capacity and experience, brought also money to the task. At his expense, the much-needed work of drainage was effected, and the malarial site changed under cultivation into a salubrious garden.

M. Singlin announced the expected new arrival to the hermits. He had been talking to M. le Maître, and :—

‘on his rising to go and see the other recluses, M. le Maître inquired if he might take the liberty of asking who were they who, he had just said, would retire to this desert.’ ‘It is M. d'Andilly, your uncle,’ said M. Singlin; ‘but that is not yet noised abroad; as yet nothing is known of it in the world, and he will not come alone. This again is one of the fruits of M. de Saint-Cyran. I marvel,’ added M. Singlin, ‘at the extent to which this man, so enlightened, was persuaded of the malice of the world, and of the need for retiring from it. For you know as well as I what M. d'Andilly is, his candour, his innocence, his integrity, his virtue and his wise simplicity. If any one might remain with innocence in the world, surely it is he. Nevertheless M. de Saint-Cyran thought something still wanting to him; and on his death-bed bequeathed him his heart on condition he should retire from the world. No sooner had he received this pledge of so tender a love, than he was touched to the quick, and conceived at once the purpose of retiring. It is this he is now working for and he thinks only of disengaging himself from his affairs.’¹

It took M. d'Andilly a considerable time to shake off his worldly engagements and set his affairs in order. Not until

¹ *Mémoires . . . par M. Fontaine*, vol. i, pp. 257–8.

1645, two years after Saint-Cyran's death, was his retreat effected. It made a great stir in Paris:—

‘where he was immensely beloved by everybody . . . He had long sighed for this moment. He had taken beforehand the title of Superintendent of the Gardens. He constantly sent letters, the most tender in the world. He declared that no one could so desire to grow younger as he to grow older by several months; and that each day gone seemed to him a great gain, because his awaited liberty was the nearer. It may be judged by this what his joy was when, his affairs terminated, he was at length able to satisfy this long thirst which had so long parched him, and to bring into this desert an inexpressible comfort. And could one see, without transports of joy, this wise, venerable and loveable old man meditating, with the seriousness natural to him, upon the outcry of the world from which God had drawn him, the agitations of the Court from which He had sheltered him, the laborious occupations of the age from which He had relieved him, to adore Him in this ever peaceful haven, as he says so well in the Ode he composed on the subject; or could one see without sorrow the shipwreck of so many persons whom his good heart had made his friends, but whom his example had not strength enough to draw from out the sea when he escaped it?

‘I own,’—Fontaine recalls in his own old age this veteran Arnauld, who, in retreat, lived to be eighty,—‘that I am still quite stirred when I think of the glowing fire which burned so constantly in this holy recluse. Age, which weakens all, seemed to bring only a fresh renewal of his ardour. I seem to see and hear him speaking to me with that glance of fire, his animated words and gestures, and his whole bearing, giving the lie in a manner to his great age, and, in a body, of eighty years, as active as a person of fifteen. His eager eyes, his firm, quick walk, his voice of thunder, his white hair harmonizing so well with the vermilion of his countenance, his grace in mounting and holding himself on horseback, the excellence of his memory, the quickness of his wit, the boldness of his hand, whether in wielding the pen or in pruning trees, were like a species of immortality, in the words of S. Jerome, an image of the resurrection to come, and, if one may say so, the reward of an excellent virtue. During his whole life he had united two things almost irreconcilable, that is to say, the polish of the world with great innocence, a very penetrating mind with incredible simplicity, heroic magnanimity with profound humility.

‘With what joy, *mon Dieu*, did one see this holy old man

retire to Port Royal, which was his family-home more than the very house he left ! . . . He came thither to finish his course, dividing the hours that remained over from prayer and attendance at the Holy Sacrament between the labours of the mind and of the body ; giving some to his customary translations, the rest to his gardens and his trees where, as he so often said to me, he forced nature, to make her fertile in fruits to which were given the name of monster on account of their prodigious size. In this blessed repose and these tranquil occupations he ended his career. Never was more appropriate emblem found, nor device which better fitted him, than the one placed beneath his portrait, of a swan sailing tranquilly upon the waters, that sings, being near to death, these words : *Quam dulci senex quiete.*¹

¹ *Mémoires . . . par M. Fontaine*, vol. i, p. 289 seq.

CHAPTER XIX.

The Growth of the Convent.—Activity of the Mère Angélique ;
her Letters

THE imprisonment of Saint-Cyran, his release and subsequent death, touched closely both nuns and hermits. The news of the release coming to the convent at an hour of silence, the Mère Agnès conveyed the glad tidings to the community by the simple gesture of loosing her girdle, and at once the attuned minds of the nuns caught her meaning.¹

One of Saint-Cyran's first visits was for the convent, and then the nuns' joy overflowed in light laughter. Something comic struck them in the way in which an ecclesiastic present used an eye-glass ; and they laughed :—

'because,' says Lancelot, who was present and who had had his own experience of a gaiety of heart resembling levity, 'it is harder to restrain laughter in great joy than in other moods. This unexpected noise surprised M. de Saint-Cyran, who did not know what caused it. He asked accordingly the reason, and, as no one knew what to answer, he said : "I had truly somewhat to say to you, but it needs a different preparation than this ; it shall be for another time." Thus a fault in itself very slight deprived us of a happiness which would not have been slight, if indeed it be a lesser one to have seen how restrained Saint-Cyran wished one to be in intercourse with Nuns, and how faithfully he observed this precept of the Wise Man : *Filiae sunt tibi, ne ostendas hilarem faciem tuam ad illas* ; since he did not think the universal joy we were in could give dispensation ; thus teaching us with what purity and reverence he desired the divine truths to be bestowed and heard.'²

The joy conferred by Saint-Cyran's presence was but short-lived. Yet Angélique, whose personal debt to him was so

¹ *Relation . . . de la Mère Angélique de S. Jean, Mémoires pour servir . . .*, vol. i, p. 238.

² *Mémoires . . . par M. Lancelot*, vol. i, p. 210 seq.

great, indulged no sorrow at his death. Her faith, true to Christian profession, saw death as gain to him and suppressed the sense of personal loss.

Relics of the master were, however, carefully treasured. The precious heart was for Arnould d'Andilly, but, before the body passed for interment to S. Jacques du Haut Pas, the Nuns gleaned their share. Lancelot, most loving disciple, prepared and dispensed the coveted parts, and he it is who tells the grim tale :—

‘To prevent the confusion which ordinarily arises on such occasions, when every one wishes to obtain a relic, I took possession of the room and I kept the door locked, permitting only the needful persons to enter. . . . I had a quantity of linen steeped in his blood. I made them take his heart, which he had bequeathed to M. d'Andilly . . . and M. d'Andilly afterwards wished it to be preserved at Port Royal des Champs. I caused the entrails to be set aside, and they were buried at Port Royal in Paris to gratify the devotion of the Mère Angélique. I reserved the top part of his head . . . to give into the hands of his nephew, who has since given it to Port Royal. I was careful to gather up all the dust made when the head was severed. I broke off also the fairly large pieces remaining at the back of the head and one was sent to the Monastery of the Visitation at Poitiers, which he had carefully formed from its establishment. I cut off a quantity of his hair, and I kept the shirt in which he died, which the Mère Angélique had begged to have.

‘On Monday evening’—Saint-Cyran had died on the Sunday—M. le Maître arrived from Port Royal des Champs, and on learning of all these little treasures I had garnered was not yet satisfied. He wished to have the hands; those hands, he said, all pure and holy, which he raised so often to God, which have written so much truth, and which were still fighting for the Church when God called him. He obtained the approval of M. Singlin; but it was not so easy a thing to accomplish, because the body was already shrouded and set in a wooden coffin until the leaden one should be made. It was placed in the parlour, covered with a pall, surrounded by lights and attended by an Ecclesiastic of the parish whom it was undesirable to have as witness of our devout act. Nevertheless the matter did not admit of further deliberation, for the man with the lead coffin was every moment expected.

‘It was thought well to charge me with the execution of the design. So, after sending the said Ecclesiastic to supper,

I shut myself up in the room with one other person. We removed all these trappings of death, we opened the coffin, we uncovered the cloth wrapped round the body, and, devoutly kissing those hands so worthy to be venerated, I took the knife and cut them both off at the wrist, and placed them very cleanly in a box which I had got ready for this purpose, and on the morrow I carried them to the Mère Angélique, together with the greater part of the relics I have already mentioned. I found the body of M. de Saint-Cyran as supple and as easy to handle as though he had but just expired, although he had already been dead more than thirty hours; a thing which in certain saints has been looked upon as a mark of great holiness and innocence.

‘Words fail to express the joy of the Mère Angélique when I placed this sacred trust in her hands, or the reverence with which she received it. . . .’¹

The first benefit which Angélique had realized in the teaching of Saint-Cyran was the confirmation of all her own tendencies; under his guidance she could pursue, with all the ‘support of obedience’, the ideal of the Religious Life as she had conceived it in her girlish ardour, as she had endeavoured to imprint it upon her convent *des Champs*—the ideal of simplicity, of poverty common as well as individual, of perfect disinterestedness and laborious charity. From this ideal she had not swerved in heart. Through all the temporal difficulties of the Paris convent, which had made her ‘shed a million tears and pass many nights without sleeping’, she had never been tempted,—by the grace, as she relates, of God,—to refuse any poor girl who proffered herself. Nevertheless, whether from lack of faith or error of judgement, or from whatever human weakness, she had betrayed her convent into a wrong track, had been herself an instrument in the very worldly procedure by which the House, first recipient of Saint-Cyran’s teaching, the *Maison du S. Sacrement*, had been set on foot. Her indiscretion in choice of a Director, in ever leaving—so she now felt—the original convent, was largely responsible for the debts of Port Royal.

On these points Saint-Cyran did not fail to blame her, or to confirm her self-blame. For in him she had at length found a director who did not flatter, but who satisfied her early desire,

¹ *Mémoires . . . par M. Lancelot*, vol. i, p. 255 seq.

satisfied it yet more completely than had S. François de Sales, for a stern and inflexible guide. He condemned roundly the way, by soliciting patronage and seeking notoriety, in which so sacred a project as the *Institut du S. Sacrement* had been set on foot; he declared that God's best grace upon it would be persecution—a grace which, in that matter of the *Chapelet*, did not fail it. As for the debts:—

‘M. de Saint-Cyran said to me,’ Angélique tells her nephew, ‘that it was not the rich Sisters who should pay our debts, but God; that I had offended Him by my indiscretion and by my rashness, and ought to satisfy Him by penitence; that, when I should have satisfied God, God would satisfy men, and that I should no sooner have discharged myself of what I owed to God, than God would discharge me of all our debt. These sincere words from this great man delighted me. He did not flatter me like all the others, who excused me on the score of good intention for these mad and rash undertakings.’¹

Nor was Angélique slow to follow the road indicated. Her self-imposed bodily penance was grievous,² only less painful to read of than the ingenious humiliations she underwent at the hands of the nuns from Tard.

Neither bodily pain nor repentance subdued her joyous serenity. And for the debt, the method proved in the course of time effective. New and unsolicited benefactions came before long to enable their discharge, Saint-Cyran himself aiding, whereas the Bishop of Langres, who had instigated the outlay, had thought always the security too poor to advance money himself. Angélique comments on her experiences with a characteristic touch of humorous irony: ‘For my part I have sometimes said that penance brought us thousandfold goods, both through cutting off superfluities, and through the movement God inspired in penitent persons to assist us. The Monks are very unfortunate to oppose it; it saves both in the next world and in this.’³

¹ *Entretiens . . . avec M. le Maître*, Mémoires pour servir . . . , vol. ii, p. 320.

² Cf. *Relation de la conduite de la Mère Angélique dans la première Maison du S. Sacrement . . . par la Mère Magdeleine de Sainte-Agnès de Ligni*, Mémoires pour servir . . . , vol. i, p. 530 seq.

³ *Entretiens . . . avec M. le Maître*, loc. cit., p. 322.

Saint-Cyran confirmed her also in her desire for retirement ; a nun's duty was within convent walls and should be as little as possible extended beyond. She should not encourage that easy frequentation of the convent parlour with which, as with the hearing of sermons, the fashionable world then seasoned its frivolities. A set of 'Resolutions,' which she drew up, show how truly Angélique desired such retirement, and how simply faithful she remained to her earlier ideal.¹ Later tales of her rebuffs to ladies kneeling before the grille bear further witness to her dread of idle converse. 'Those who want our prayers,' she said harshly to one, 'should leave us in peace to pray.'²

Happily for the interest of the tale, the actual effect of union with Saint-Cyran was widening, and not restrictive, for the convent. Neither Port Royal nor Angélique were hard of access to genuine and approved penitents. The lady rebuffed, undeservedly rebuffed as it proved, in the manner told, became a valued secular friend at the convent, a right arm to administer the Mother's charity, and eventually in widowhood ended her days as herself nun within the walls. And this lady—Madame de Saint-Ange was her name in the world—was but one of many. As the movement stirred by Saint-Cyran spread, secular friends multiplied, aiding, and aided by, our Mothers in works of charity and in care of souls.

Ladies moreover, serious penitents it was hoped, were permitted to make retreats within the convent. The Princesse de Guémené, coquetting with the thought of permanent retreat, built on to the convent an apartment for her own use, and Madame de Sablé made a similar annex. The Princesse Marie de Gonzague had also an apartment for her use in the convent, and these three ladies were sometimes in simultaneous retreat. Then Angélique's ingenuity was taxed to keep them from lapsing into worldly gossip. 'I must go and separate our Ladies,' she was known to say, 'for they do harm to one

¹ *Relation de la conduite de la Mère Angélique dans la première Maison du S. Sacrement . . . par la Mère Magdeleine de Sainte-Agnès de Ligni, Mémoires pour servir . . .*, vol. i, p. 534.

² *Mémoire . . . de la Sœur Annè de Sainte-Eugénie de Boulogne de Saint-Ange, Vies . . . des Religieuses . . .*, vol. ii, p. 408.

another. A way of doing the hair, a fashion, a collar, is always being brought up. One must try to banish all these temptations of the devil (*ces diableries*), which are not permissible in Christian converse.’¹

Madame de Guémené relapsed ‘into vanity’, of the former scandalous kind, though she remained faithful always in affection to Port Royal; Madame de Sablé was but a tender penitent, renouncing the grosser and more ostentatious pleasures of the world for delicate refinements of taste, and teasing the nuns with her constant dread of death and infectious illness. Marie de Gonzague alone of the three had force of sincerity enough to win and sustain the Mère Angélique’s permanent regard. She too had thoughts of the veil, but, when offered marriage with the King of Poland, the attractions of a crown proved too strong,—as she owned with an honesty which charmed our Mother however the sentiment might disappoint her. As Queen of Poland she remained constant still in friendship with the Mère Angélique, generous in gifts to the convent and, a matter of more value in the Mother’s eyes, obedient to her exhortations to piety and benevolence within her kingdom. Angélique’s letters to her range over twenty years and, under all forms of respect, are uniform in faithful dealing and reminder of the vanity of worldly honour. ‘She receives my letters,’ Angélique tells her nephew, ‘with joy, and M. de Fleury, her Confessor, has written to tell me all her household are delighted when she gets them, because they see that in consequence she treats them more gently, with more moderation and charity, that she pardons their shortcomings and is more devout and self-restrained. It is this fruit that God draws from my letters which leads me to write to her with a force that sometimes astonishes me, and with a like sincerity as to our Sisters.’²

But when choice lay between writing to the Queen and to a poor widow, the Mother—true Christian democrat—gave preference to the widow.

¹ *Relation . . . de la Vie de la Mère Marie-Angélique . . . par la Mère Angélique de S. Jean, Mémoires pour servir . . .*, vol. i, p. 242.

² *Entretiens . . . avec M. le Maître, Mémoires pour servir . . .*, vol. ii, p. 385.

Angélique's narrative closed, as we saw, with the imprisonment of Saint-Cyran. In compensation for the broken tale, her letters become from the time of her return to Port Royal from the *Maison du S. Sacrement* very frequent, and in them we may trace the course of events and realize the energy and participating zeal of the Mother.

The convent in Paris could never regain the idyllic obscurity of the early days at Les Champs. It acquired instead a new weight and dignity ; in the eyes of the world through its part in matters which made a great stir, in its own eyes as repository of the pure Christian doctrine, of the true faith of the Church. And at length the community was called upon, involuntarily transgressing the prescribed sphere of nuns, to bear active witness and sustain persécution for the truth thus received. Angélique felt the prophetic force of words addressed to her long before by S. François de Sales : ' God has shown me that He has reserved you for things of great consequence, for which you have great cause to render thanks to His Divine Majesty.' ¹

For the first few years after her return from the *Maison du S. Sacrement* to Port Royal, Angélique had no authority, save as Mistress of Novices, in the convent. Not she, but Agnès, was elected Abbess, and after the term of three years re-elected, by the nuns. The obedience which she rendered under this congenial rule, if it gratified her imperious spirit's need for discipline, was no check upon her activity and energy. Freedom from the cares of authority would seem rather to have facilitated outer interests.

We find her continuing, for example, a long correspondence, begun at the *Maison du S. Sacrement*, with a worthy ecclesiastic of Boulogne who, Director to a convent of women, asks her advice in reforming it. Angélique's sound, even masculine, common sense and her power of organization,—it is true she consulted Saint-Cyran—, together with the experience and insight into character she had gained, appear in these letters. The nuns' narratives display the beloved Mother in her fervour of charity and apparent blindness of humility. Her own words

¹ *Entretiens . . . avec M. le Maître, Mémoires pour servir . . .*, vol. ii, p. 304.

show her keen-sighted enough, and free from all delusions as to the native virtue of women or nuns, whatever she might hope from the transforming power of grace.

The point of Lay-Sisters is raised :—

The reason,' she writes, 'that I strongly approve of having none, is the great difficulty in finding such as one would wish, and because they ordinarily enter Religion with the object of finding what they cannot have in the world, and to assure their livelihood; and then the Choir Nuns apply themselves more bravely to work where there are no Lay-Sisters, and mutually serve each other with more goodwill. I would retrench other austerities rather than that of work.'¹

In respect of unusual and voluntary penances :

'You will do well not to permit them, for singularity does great harm.'²

As to *correction fraternelle* :

'This brotherly reproof is entirely against my judgement, for I have never seen a Community in which it could be advantageously practised. The majority of Sisters have small wit and still less discretion. They are sometimes over-conscientious and are importunate in warning, even when the thing is not worth it, or in respect of a person who does not take it well; so that, out of a trifle, a serious matter is made, through the rebuff given by the Sister reproofed, or through her secret rancour. Moreover, it is a source of distraction to judge of others' behaviour. We on the contrary strive to accustom the Sisters to attend only to their duties.'³

She gives the key to Port Royal's theory of discipline : 'In fine, it is by the interior that the exterior must be formed, not the interior by the exterior.'⁴

Angélique's counsel to this priest, M. Macquart, extends even to his duties in his parish. She reminds him that the souls of his parishioners are as dear to God as those of the nuns. As early as 1635, while she is still at the *Maison du S. Sacrement*, she can hold up to him this example, significant of the nature—in some respects so like Methodism—and early spread of Saint-Cyran's reform.

'There is a good Curé in Lorraine of whom marvels are told.

¹ *Lettres de la Mère Angélique*, vol. i, pp. 49–50.

² *Ib.*, p. 68.

³ *Ib.*, p. 71.

⁴ *Ib.*, p. 54.

All his parishioners are true Religious, that is to say, true Christians. They are divided into three classes, beginners, proficient, and more advanced. Their Curé takes as much pains to instruct them as you do your Nuns. They practise penance and mortification, and great charity reigns among them, in imitation of the primitive Church ; in such wise that none among them lack necessities, because they assist one another with as great goodwill as though they were brethren.’¹

With such words and counsel, Angélique ‘gives of her poverty’, as she has done, she laments, all her life,—

‘in such a manner that I shall never be filled unless God show me the mercy, which I ask Him with all my heart, of spending the remainder of my days in solitude and a simple Nun, as I am at present. . . .’²

The Mother Superior of that same convent at Boulogne draws also from Angélique’s stores, winning for example from our charitably fervent Mother, so clear-sighted an analysis of souls as that which follows :—

‘Mothers Superior must be exceedingly discreet in all their words, and weigh them with the weight of the true gold of holy charity. Whether they exhort, or reprove, or comfort, they must adapt themselves to souls, that they may be neither too forcible nor too mild ; and not only may no souls be treated alike, but the same one must be dealt with variously according to the dispositions found in it, the which vigilant charity carefully observes, in order to render effective service to one’s Sisters, and be able to do for them what is always necessary, which is: to destroy, to root up, to plant, and to build. None, as a rule, sincerely desire one to root up and destroy, and yet it is impossible to plant and build without having destroyed and uprooted ; which sets Superiors, and must needs set them, at a loss, not knowing where to lay hold of these souls which they see languish in their feebleness, their self-love and their bondage, not only unwilling that the cause should be uprooted, but unable even to endure that it should be shown them, thinking this would reduce them to extremity and make the path to heaven so narrow as to be inaccessible to them.

‘There are more of these souls than one thinks ; and many, out of human wisdom, conceal themselves, not manifesting their distress on hearing Superiors speak of true virtue more

¹ *Lettres de la Mère Angélique*, vol. i, p. 62.

² *Ib.*, p. 81.

forcibly than they like, either to themselves or to others, because they do not wish to be thought weak. They are content to accept and practise only what pleases them. These souls are dangerously sick. Others avow their repugnance frankly, and sometimes with spirit, and their lack of conviction as to the need of such rigorous observance in matters which are good indeed and holy, but so painful to Nature that they cannot be practised without special grace from God. These too are very sick, for hardihood is no better than hypocrisy, save in so far as it makes itself known and attracts no false praise. There are others who are neither hypocritical nor bold, but who yet have no more true zeal than the others, and equally dread the truth and what they take for severity; but, whether from gentleness, humour, timidity, or even from affection for their Superiors, they will not own to feeling them too strong. Nevertheless they give way to discouragement, to vexation, or to seeking excuses for their cowardice, instead of looking for the remedy in humility and prayer. Superiors must support all these various souls without neglecting them, nor yet urging them; they must despair of none, no more than they must confide too much in the good tendencies of the best. . . .'¹

The Superior of the Annonciades was, Angélique¹ learnt, herself but a half-hearted soul, one of those Abbesses more eager to reform her convent than her person. She had conceived, however, under the influence of her Director, M. Macquet, an enthusiasm for our Mother, and, though she evades her counsel to lay down authority for a time and enter penitential retreat, she yet accepts meekly her forcible and candid exhortations. She had written to ask for a portrait, and receives this reply :—

‘I am only too much indebted to you, my very dear Mother, for your extraordinary kindness. I pray God with all my heart to reward you for it, and to moderate its excess, which is displeasing to Him in all things, since His wisdom makes and desires all with weight and measure. I cannot, above all, forgive you your vain wish to have my portrait, and I tell you before God that I should believe I was offending Him mortally by consenting to have it taken. Is it possible that you do not see the vanity of this wish, and the grave fault I should commit in consenting? Permit me, in gratitude for your kindness, to take courage and tell you the thought I have

¹ *Lettres de la Mère Angélique*, vol. i, p. 188 seq.

ventured to conceive, though I do it with difficulty and scruple, since God makes me wish to attend only to my own wretchedness. But since He permits you to set trust in me, and so much affection, unworthy as I am, perhaps it is His will that I should speak to you ; I implore His goodness that it may be by His spirit.

‘I say then, my dear Mother, that this request shows me that you are still all human, and in the devotion of the day and not of Christian grace. The devotion of the day tends to canonize self. We do not wish to see the imperfections of those we love, any more than our own ; or at least, if we see them, we excuse them like our own. Where does self-love lead us ? We practise the commandment of God to treat our neighbour as ourselves, but it is not in order to follow His commandment, but only to obey our own inclination ; accordingly this love produces only bad effects which injure our neighbour, or serve as temptation to him as well as to ourselves. Christian charity on the contrary more readily endures defects in enemies, or in those for whom nature has some natural aversion, rather than in friends ; for as for the latter, while tolerating, it corrects them, if it can. Thus, my very dear Mother, desiring to have this Christian charity for you, I am in distress for you and never pray God for you, or think of you, without anxiety ; because (may I venture to say it ?) I am afraid always that you do not think enough of your salvation, that you flatter yourself in your imperfections, or that, recognizing them, you let yourself be discouraged rather than fling yourself at the feet of Our Lord, to ask His mercy. Meanwhile life passes in this wretched way, and we shall presently be called upon to go and give account of our cowardly and lukewarm life, without having other excuses to produce than our own malice and corruption, which will accuse us ourselves. Thus the discouragements we have had during our life will be followed by despair at death.

‘I speak to you as I do to my own soul. . . .’¹

With openness of another kind Angélique writes, this same year (1637), to the Mother de Chantal. She had the happiness, before leaving the *Maison du Saint Sacrement*, of renewing that early intercourse when, young Abbess at Maubuisson, she had placed her soul ‘as a little Novice’ in the hands of the elder Mother.

Madame de Chantal was then first founding, in union with S. François de Sales, her Order of the Visitation ; now, an

¹ *Lettres de la Mère Angélique*, vol. i, p. 88 seq.

aged Mother, she could look upon it, spread and flourishing in many branches throughout the country. But her letters to Angélique are on a sad theme. She was suffering, at this end of her course, from religious depression, a long and obstinate *sécheresse* of the heart. The ideas which had ruled her life had lost for a time their savour, the emotional reward. She relates to Angélique her depression and loss of trust, and Angélique receives the confidence with the tenderness, as she herself says, of a daughter. She, and Saint-Cyran when consulted, see in this suffering no guilty discouragement, but the perfecting hand of God's grace. The two Mothers write in profound union of soul:—

‘God has given me, my very dear Mother,’ Madame de Chantal responds to Angélique, ‘decided comfort on reading your letter, and I know not what of profound and intimate delectation for you, so that it seems there is but one heart between us, and that your prayers and those of this worthy servant of God (Saint-Cyran), which you have obtained for me, will, by the mercy of God, procure me strength and grace not to offend God. . . . Believe that you are so dear and so close to me, that I cannot, so I feel, offer myself to God without you ; and I have confidence that in my need you will persevere, with an extraordinary care, in praying and in causing prayer to be made.’¹

Angélique is filled with mingled sorrow and joy,—compassion at the spiritual martyrdom undergone, joy exceeding the sorrow: ‘because I see the singular love of Our Lord which perfects in you His holy work, by the cross with which He has visited you. . . .’ The practical advice meanwhile is exceedingly sound:—

‘Do not speak of your suffering, not to God, nor to yourself, neither consider its nature to tell to any one whatsoever, and never make any examination of it. Hide your trouble from yourself and as though you did not feel it. . . .’²

This, the deathbed counsel of the Mother Chastel, Madame de Chantal's fellow-worker in her Order, is heartily corroborated by Angélique:—

‘How wisely you act, my dear Mother, in avoiding all

¹ *Lettres de la Mère Angélique*, vol. i, p. 109.

² *Ib.*, p. 110 seq.

reflections! For it is true that your sole remedy is: never to look at yourself but, as you do, at the very holy will of God, to accomplish it every instant and whenever occasion offers.'

'And I, my dear Mother',—Angélique reciprocates confidence, speaking again to another soul 'as to her own', and this time without thought of edifying—, 'I am unhappy at the continuance of my infidelities and resistances to His grace. I cannot tell you what I suffer, if it is not enough to see me always in a state in which I know, so it seems to me, that the essence of my spirit is not truly God's, since I find it always moved by self-love, and never making a genuine resistance in order to submit perfectly to God; so that I believe all my life is only lying and hypocrisy. With that, I have a fear of God which is servile and horrible, and such dread of death and of hell that it seems to me I have no love at all nor true confidence in Him. It appears to me that all the prayers, and the acts I perform, are only of the lips and an outcome of the human mind, from my knowledge that they ought to be made, and not of grace. However, I am at peace, and only too joyous. Light-mindedness effaces often the thoughts of my spirit, which is not even perturbed, though it is grieved. Yet I prefer this affliction to idle joy. I implore you, my very dear Mother, pray God to have pity on me, and to destroy all the opposition I make to His grace, whatever it costs me. It seems to me that I am in extreme need of being humiliated and put to shame, while yet I dread it and ever fly from it. God knows what I need, and can do it in my despire. Obtain for me this grace. . . .'¹

Angélique, we have already observed (p. 107), was not free from the darker influences of Christian doctrine; the dread of death and judgement had strong hold upon her. Activity and force of will suppressed, however, the tendency to gloomy introspection, and now outside events more and more claimed her mind.

When the book *De la Fréquente Communion* appeared, her letters show her participating zeal. The author, *le petit frère* of an earlier date, becomes now 'Very reverend Father'; as she addresses him. But her exhortations are all maternal, as she recognizes in this brother, twenty years her junior, the same hot temperament as her own, and reminds him of the parting words of their common mother in the flesh.

¹ *Lettres de la Mère Angélique*, vol. i, pp. 119-20.

Madame Arnauld, or Sœur Catherine de Sainte Félicité as she was known in Religion, had died a year earlier in the convent. As her daughters gathered round her bedside, she gave to each appropriate blessing. When Agnès, now Abbess, begged to be spoken to as her daughter and told what God willed, she maternally bade her submit to what was thought good for her health. But to Angélique, who had been Abbess when she, Madame Arnauld, had become a Religious, the dying woman said: 'My Mother, be the Mother of all your brothers and of all your sisters, and tell them the truth always.' And to her youngest son Antoine, she sent the injunction that 'since God had called him to defend the truth, he should never relax and should, if need be, die for the truth,—and she again repeated, that he should never relax in defence of the truth.'¹

Angélique accepted the dying charge:—

'Our good mother,' she writes to Antoine, 'who, in dying, so conjured you to suffer and die for the truth, and me to be your Mother, has as it were bequeathed to me the tender love she had for her Benjamin; and I hope she will obtain for me also from God her strength, that I may see you suffer with as glad a heart, and die if God find you worthy, for the truth, as she desired. I do not cease to pray God that He will fortify in you His grace more and more, . . .'²

Angélique's love for this young brother, and anxiety for his spiritual welfare, betrayed her, however, into a regrettable error. She opened one of his letters addressed, not to her, but to M. Singlin; and, lax as was even this convent's standard of honour in such matters,—the nuns had no scruple in unsealing and copying their beloved Mother's letters to the Queen of Poland—, the hasty act filled her with compunction.

'I must ask your forgiveness, my very dear Father, for having, the other day, opened your letter to M. Singlin. Your note had given me such great distress for the distress which you told me you had, that, for my solace, I committed this fault, thinking you would tell him more openly the cause of your trouble, which I feared might be some weariness and discouragement at your present situation; and, as I saw the

¹ *Relation de la Vie . . . de Madame Arnauld . . . par Madame le Maître sa fille, Mémoires pour servir . . .*, vol. iii, p. 300 seq.

² *Lettres de la Mère Angélique*, vol. i, pp. 255–6

contrary, I was comforted, save that there remains grief for my fault. It was indeed great, since I sought my consolation by offending against God and violating your privacy. I once more ask your forgiveness. I committed a double fault, doing it in presence of your messenger, to whom it set an ill example. Such is my wonted hastiness, hardihood, impatience and lack of mortification, all this having part in the action, which bears no excuse, although I know well your goodness would find one; but no man can justify himself before God, nor justify others.' ¹

Although much harassed, and reduced to hiding, by the outcry which the Jesuits raised at the *Fréquente Communion*, Arnauld was, as we saw, in that matter triumphant. His pen was kept, however, in constant exercise to defend and corroborate the work, and Angélique follows anxiously the controversy, anxious above all that the heat of combat should not weaken charity or infringe upon prayer.

Even when open combat paused, the backbiting calumnies of Arnauld's vigilant enemies continued, embracing also the convent. Angélique writes of these things to the Queen of Poland, mentioning for example an unkind trick played in transmission of copies of the *Fréquente Communion*, in the new Latin version. The packet was intercepted at Lyons and, in its place, another substituted, which contained all the books written against the work.

'What will you think, Madam,' she continues, 'if word is sent to Poland, as it is elsewhere, that we no longer believe in two Sacraments, in Penance and the Eucharist, and that we no longer pray to the Holy Virgin or the Saints? I am confident your Majesty will not believe a word of it; the rosary' (a gift of the queen's) 'in front of the little grille gives the lie to this calumny, and gives us the greater desire to tell the beads with all our heart for your Majesty.' ²

About this time, the first stone of the convent church was laid, and the Archbishop gave permission, at the ceremony, for lay visitors to enter the refectory. Then the prejudices of the crowd saw, so we are told, in the pious texts round the walls, a resemblance to a Huguenot place of worship, the Temple at Charenton.

¹ *Lettres de la Mère Angélique*, vol. i, pp. 261-2. ² *Ib.*, pp. 328-9.

CHAPTER XX

Return to Port Royal des Champs.

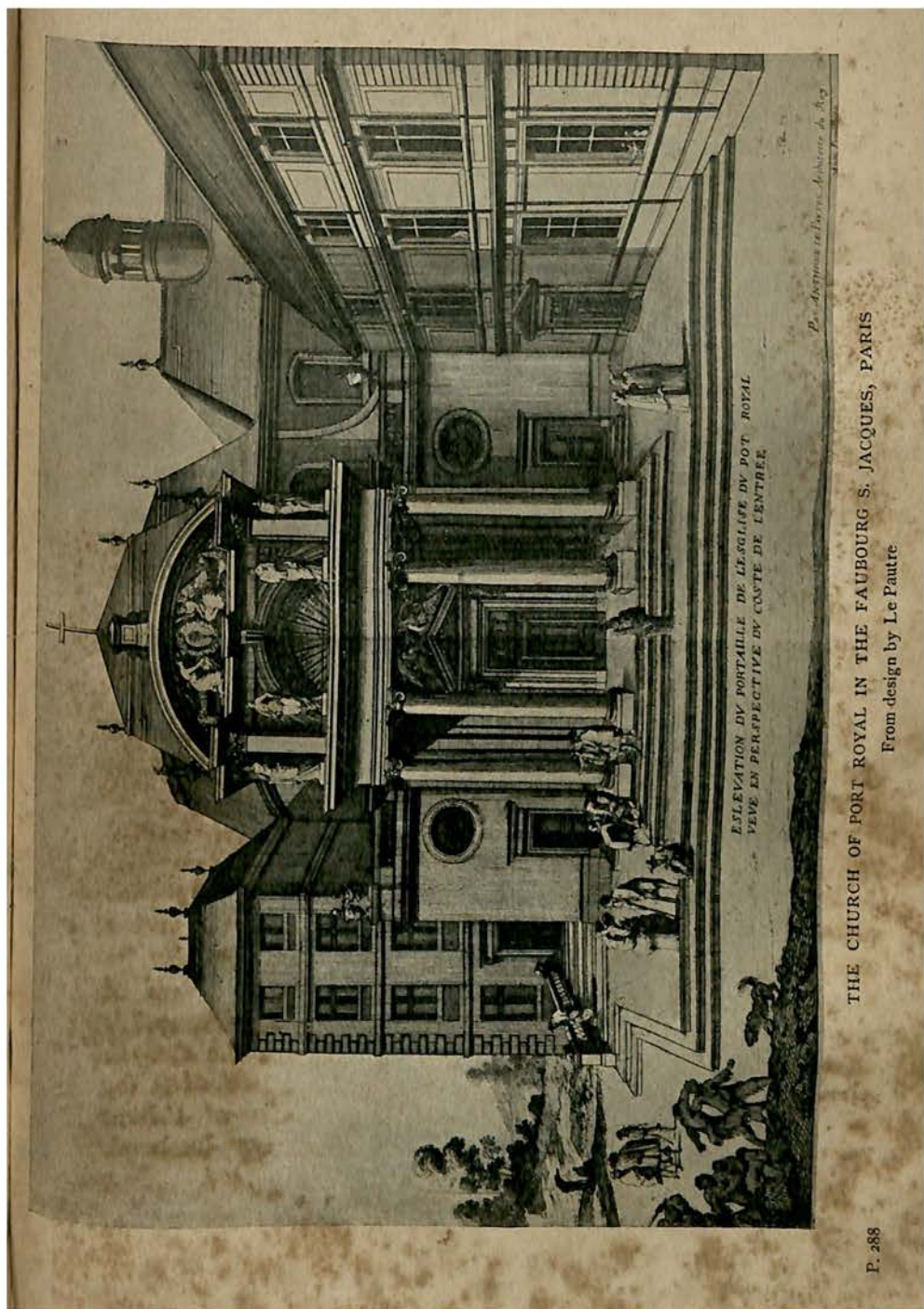
THROUGH good report and ill report the Convent of Port Royal grew in numbers—in 1647 there were ninety-eight nuns—as in outside influence.

The offshoot, the *Maison du S. Sacrement*, had been unable, we saw, through lack of funds, to subsist as a separate building and its Sisters were, in 1638, gathered in to the larger community. After remaining for a time in abeyance, the institution, with its special duties, was, in 1641, transferred to Port Royal, all the nuns there taking the name of *Filles du S. Sacrement*, and exchanging the black Bernardine scapulary for a white scapulary with scarlet cross on the breast. At the same time such funds as the *Maison du S. Sacrement* had possessed—the thirty thousand *livres*, namely, left by Mme Bardeau—were handed over to Port Royal and, by decision of the trustees, devoted to building the convent chapel.

Built from designs by Le Pautre, 'on the model of the Little Jesuits,'¹ this church was esteemed a gem of his architecture; it remains, the one original part still extant of Port Royal in Paris, enclosed, as formerly within the convent walls, now within the precincts of the Maternity Hospital.

Even our Mother Angélique would seem to have rejoiced, with a momentary lapse from her cult of plainness, in the beauty of this church, and to have welcomed gifts for its adornment. She acknowledged, speaking of the errors of the Carmelites to her nephew, that she herself was once guilty of asking the Queen of Poland for a carpet for the church, though, repentant when it came, she utilized half of it for a canopy. Gifts were not lacking; the Queen of Poland was ready to lavish them, and the King, her husband,

¹ v. *Lettres de la Mère Angélique*, vol. i, p. 309.



THE CHURCH OF PORT ROYAL IN THE FAUBOURG S. JACQUES, PARIS
From design by Le Pautre



THE MÈRE AGNÈS AND SEUR CATHERINE DE SAINTE-SUZANNE DE CHAMPAIGNE (IN 1662)
From picture by Philippe de Champaigne (photo by Giraudon)

sent a fine golden pyx¹; the painter Philippe de Champaigne,² whose daughter was a nun at Port Royal, gave pictures. The inventory of belongings in the sacristy taken at a later date (1665) makes no ill show for a convent, and proves Port Royal of Paris to have never recovered the quite literal grace of poverty which adorned the primitive days at Les Champs.

The old ideal, however, was now fully reaffirmed. And at length the opportunity came for return, without abandoning the convent in Paris, to the earlier home. The community had now outgrown the building which, twenty years before, had been beyond their needs, and so greatly beyond their means; and in 1647, after long application, they obtained leave from the Archbishop to make use as well of the old convent in the country. The two Houses were to form one Community, under the rule of one same Abbess and subject to the same Constitutions and Episcopal control.

Port Royal des Champs had, in the meanwhile, notably changed in aspect. The hermits, with their manual labour, and M. d'Andilly in particular with no small expenditure of money upon drainage, had converted the neglected and malarious 'desert' into a healthy and productive garden. They themselves, on the proposed advent of the nuns, removed to Les Granges, a farm-building upon the adjacent hill-slope, d'Andilly alone retaining a dwelling in the valley beside the convent, in a part of the outer precincts, where he could more conveniently superintend the grounds.

At the time of this return Angélique was again Abbess. Succeeding, by due election of her nuns, her sister Agnès in 1644, she had been re-elected after the prescribed term of three

¹ v. *Lettres de la Mère Angélique*, vol. ii, pp. 597, 600-1. This pyx was valued, in 1665, at 12,000 francs. 'Le fonds de la coupe est fait d'une Agathe, le reste est d'or, enriché de petits Diamonds et autres pierreries d'un ouvrage extrêmement délicat.' *Archives Nationales*, Paris, MS. L. 1035.

² Philippe de Champaigne gave a portrait of the Mère Angélique (presumably after her death in 1661) to the Mère Agnès, and it hung over the chapter-door of the convent in Paris. His most famous painting (vide illustration), now in the Louvre, records his gratitude for his daughter's miraculous cure in 1662 through the prayers of the Mère Agnès, and was also given to Port Royal.

years. Her grief at the reimposition of an authority which, as she felt, fostered her natural failings, touched the hearts even, we are told, of the nuns who elected her. It did not hamper her in the conscientious exercise of that authority.

Returning now to the scene of her young enthusiasm, Angélique brought a like fervour—undaunted, however schooled by long experience—to the task of reform, hoping to call back to life the earlier idyl of simplicity, seclusion, and literal poverty. She held before her present nuns the high level of those former days. Rather than have the beloved solitude broken in upon, she would take a nun, whose friends wished to see her, back to Paris. She had looked forward eagerly to the outward stillness which should foster peace of the soul; once there, she writes that she could have forgotten such a place as Paris existed, were it not for the friends for whom charity bound her to pray.

The Mother Madeleine de Ste Agnès *de Ligny*, whom we saw as a postulant in the *Maison du S. Sacrement*, and to whose account of events there we have alluded, was one of the nuns chosen to accompany Angélique back to *Les Champs*, and to her we owe the narrative of the return together with that of subsequent events. She tells us how, the re-establishment scarce effected, the first Fronde broke the peace of the country, alarming the convent with threats of pillage and giving the nuns, in place of their coveted quiet, an active exercise for practical charity; how Port Royal des Champs, with the hermits to protect it, became general granary and storehouse, as also centre of benevolence, for the peasantry of the whole countryside; and yet again how, at the second Fronde, all returned for the time being to Paris, to exercise their hospitality there upon nuns from other convents.

*Narrative of the re-establishment of Port Royal des Champs in 1648, and of what occurred in the subsequent years,*¹ by the *Mère Magdaleine de Sainte-Agnès de Ligni*.

‘When the Mother Marie Angélique spoke to M. de Saint-Cyran about the translation she had made in 1626 of her Monastery to Paris, he testified to her that he did not approve the advice given her, thus readily to abandon her ancient House in the

¹ *Mémoires pour servir à l’histoire de Port-Royal*, vol. ii, p. 1 seq.

country. And when she said to him that at times nearly everybody was ill, and there were barely enough to attend the Choir, he answered her: "So much the better. Is it not just as good to serve God in the Infirmary, when He wills it, as in the Church? There are no prayers more pleasing to Him than those made under suffering." M. de Saint-Cyran always prompted the Mother to preserve this House, in the hope that God would some day re-establish there souls to serve Him. The Mother Angélique entered into his views both by submission and by the instinct of grace, ever regretting the solitude and remoteness from the world of this ancient dwelling-place, whither she desired to return although she saw no prospect of doing so.

'Meanwhile many proposals were made her for raising money on what was left in this Abbey in the country. A Religious House wished to buy the stalls of the Church which were very beautiful; others asked for the remains and the woodwork of the dormitories. In the extreme need of the House in Paris at that time, on account of the loans raised for building, considerable sums might have been thus obtained which would have greatly helped. But the Mother Angélique could not entertain any of these proposals, preserving always in her heart a secret confidence that God would give her some day an opportunity to repair the fault she believed she had committed by following too readily the advice given her to remove to Paris.

'The Mother Angélique had always expressed to us much sorrow at having left this House of Port Royal des Champs; and she often said to us that she feared truly the advice, which afterwards appeared to her very human, had not been given by the Spirit of God. Thus she preserved always the hope of returning; but, having several times endeavoured to obtain the consent of M. Jean François de Gondi, Archbishop of Paris, he had always refused. At length, after having consulted anew with very enlightened persons of great piety, having greatly recommended the matter to God, and having made the Community pray, without specifying the occasion (save that it was for an affair which concerned God's glory), she made the proposition again to M. the Archbishop of Paris in 1647.

'The Prelate with great kindness granted permission to reinstate the Nuns in this House, which was to form one body with that in Paris, and be subject to the government of the same Abbess. The Mother Angélique felt extreme joy in seeing herself in a position to repair the fault she thought she had committed in leaving this Monastery. She received much

happiness also from the hope she had of spending at least a portion of her life in solitude and remoteness from the world ; and she would have wished to be able to spend it so entirely, after having laid down the rank of Abbess she then held.

‘She at once called together the Sisters of the Chapter, to let them know she had leave to re-establish this Monastery. All the Sisters were greatly moved, thinking truly that she wanted to make it her habitual residence ; and, flinging themselves at her feet, they most of them begged her to take them with her. She comforted them, giving them to understand that this work was for the glory of God ; and that, since the first Monastery of the Holy Sacrament had not been able to subsist according to the intention of persons who had made donations to that end, she had felt bound to set in its place that of Port Royal des Champs, and that she had communicated this idea to the Archbishop of Paris, who had approved it. She told them also that they were well aware of the regret she had always entertained at having left the Monastery of Port Royal des Champs, that it had always weighed on her conscience, and that for this reason she was very happy at being able to re-establish it.

‘In truth, this joy so shone in her countenance that we had never seen the like in her. Nevertheless, since she had great benevolence for the Sisters, she comforted them with much tenderness, promising to visit frequently both Convents, and even to take them all in turn with her. She told them also that this parting must be offered to God in gratitude for the grace we had just received, the Institute of the Holy Sacrament having been recently established. Finally she conjured them not to discuss the matter, and not to tell one another the distress they might feel on this account, which could only serve to distract and weaken them ; she added that they must be content to offer this re-establishment heartily to God, and pray Him to bless it and bestow His Spirit upon those destined for it. Work was at once begun, to set the House of Port Royal des Champs in order, that the Nuns might be lodged ; and it lasted until the May of the following year.

‘On the eve of the day the Mother Angélique was to leave, M. the Cardinal de Retz, coadjutor of M. de Gondi his uncle, the Archbishop of Paris, did us the honour of coming to Port Royal of Paris to bid her adieu. He was also so good as to desire to see all the Nuns who were to accompany her, and he gave them his blessing. On the morrow, May the 13th, 1648, the Mother Angélique, and those who were to follow, communicated at the first Mass ; and afterwards she assembled all the Sisters to bid them farewell. She informed them the moment of

departure had come; and, seeing them all dissolve into tears, she said to them: "Why do you weep, my Sisters? Must one not do the will of God gaily and with a good grace? Rather should we rejoice that He will be glorified, as I hope, in this re-establishment." After she had comforted them and had bidden adieu to all the Nuns, the Community escorted her to the gate of the Convent, with tears and sobs beyond my power to describe. And, although the Sisters who were to follow the Mother to Port Royal des Champs went thither with all their heart, they did not fail to weep much, because of their sorrow in leaving our dear Mother Agnès, Sister Anne Eugénie de l'Incarnation (Arnauld), whom we looked upon as a third Mother, and the greater part of the Community, in whom God had placed such great union, that we could not part one from another without great violence to our feelings.

'The Mother Angélique departed then from Port Royal in Paris, accompanied by seven professed Choir Nuns and by two Lay Sisters. . . . We observed to our consolation on the road that this day, May the 13th, was a day sacred to the Holy Virgin, on which it is our custom to make a Procession in honour of Our Lady of Montferat, as do all who, like ourselves, belong to this Confraternity.

'We arrived the same day at Port Royal des Champs about two in the afternoon. So soon as we were known to be on the property of the Convent, the bells were rung and we were received with all possible solemnity and rejoicing. Two bands of different kinds of people took part in this ceremony. The first was composed of a great number of poor who had gathered in the courtyard of the Monastery, and, among them, some old women who had known the Mère Angélique there in former days, and who looked upon her as their Mother and their foster-Mother. They flung themselves at her feet and on her neck, and pressed her in their arms, unable to give adequate expression to their joy. This good Mother in her turn embraced them, without heeding that they were very dirty and to all appearance covered with vermin. All these poor people could not tire of giving loud praise to God, and of rendering Him actions of grace, for having restored to them their good Mother.

'On approaching the Church, we found another company of persons, who touched, some by medium of M. de Saint-Cyran, others by the sermons of M. Singlin, or by some extraordinary event, had retired some years previously to this solitude, to serve God there in practices of penitence and piety. All these Anchorites awaited us at the door of our Church, one of the Ecclesiastics carrying the Cross. So soon as we had

entered, they themselves entered the outer Church, where they sang the *Te Deum*, the bells still ringing.

‘The same day, which was a Wednesday, and the three following, were employed in buying the things required for the Cloister. On the Sunday following, M. de Sainte-Beuve, who had been deputed to that end by our Superior, entered the Monastery to visit the Cloister; and on the morrow he entered again, and established the Cloister. On this Sunday we began to sing the Service in the Church and to set everything in regular order.

‘The Mother Angélique worked also to make her little Community enter into the spirit and the holy dispositions in which she had seen formerly, in the same place, a great number of Sisters, under her Conduct and under that of our Mother Agnès. She took pleasure in speaking to us of the virtue and of the fervour of the first reformed Nuns, regarding whom she and some of the ancient Sisters often told marvellous instances of love of poverty, of mortification, of simplicity, of silence, and of recollectedness (*recueillement*). They told us that it was scarcely perceived that there were faulty Sisters in the Community, because those who were strong sustained the weak, and as there were very few of the latter they would have been ashamed to let their laxity and frivolity be noticed, and were themselves strengthened by the example of the others.

‘As it was one of the maxims of the Mother Angélique that things in their commencement should be taken at as high a level as possible, because one always relaxes only too much, she had a great idea of the perfection she desired to establish in this House in respect of poverty, simplicity, separation from the world, silence and union among the Sisters.

There follows the old familiar tale of Angélique’s efforts to inculcate perfect self-sacrifice and mutual charity among her nuns, and of her own practice. Inconveniences were consequent on the move, and had to be borne cheerfully. The nuns could not at once have separate cells, but slept many in a dormitory. This, Angélique told them, was the ancient practice of Religious Orders and she set them the example by having six or seven beds in her own room. She rejoiced at the deficiency in kitchen and other utensils, which obliged the nuns to be accommodative one to another, rapidly cleaning a saucepan or a dish to pass it on to a Sister.



THE MÈRE ANGÉLIQUE IN 1648 (AET. 57), AT THE TIME OF THE
RETURN TO PORT ROYAL DES CHAMPS

From picture by Philippe de Champaigne

'Not but that,' our narrative continues, 'the charity of the Mother Angélique would have led her to aid her Nuns, and give them all they needed so far as was possible, but, because we were then much in debt, we had brought furniture, linen, and utensils from the House in Paris in order to have no fresh outlay. Accordingly we dispensed with all we could, in order not to inconvenience the Sisters in Paris too much. . . .

'Our Mother exhorted us also to be satisfied in health and illness with the simplest things and those most suited to our state, without being fastidious or particular about anything. That did not prevent her from taking great care of those who were ill. She frequently visited them and took heed they should lack nothing: which she did without respect of persons.

'A Lay Postulant had been very ill and, when she began to take food again, her dinner was sent for to the kitchen. The Mother Angélique, having gone to see her, did not fail to look if this dinner was fit for a person in her condition. She observed that flies had been upon the meat and that it was unappetizing. She sent at once for the cook who had given it to the invalid, and, speaking as though it had been for herself, she asked how she had dared to send her up that? This Sister replied naïvely that she had not been told it was for her, but for the Postulant. Whereupon the Mother Angélique spoke to her very severely, to impress upon her that she should not make these distinctions, and that she should give nothing to this Sister which she would not give to her. She added that as a fact it *was* for her, since she would give her dinner to the invalid.' (Angélique's own ill health had, for some time, obliged her, by obedience, to break the general rule of abstinence she had so happily established. We spare the reader the tales of her ingenuity in turning indulgences into penance.)

'I should take too long were I to recount all her acts of charity, and all the help she gave to the poor, in health and sickness. At first something was given at the gate to all who came and who resorted to the Abbey for help in the various needs they professed. Some asked clothes, some bread, others meat and soup, milk and flour to make pap for their children, some asked for preserves for the sick, for medicine and other remedies, and in general for anything they thought of, and the Mother never sent them away, but she showed on the contrary, on all these occasions, that she had no greater joy than to do good to all she could assist, and thus to practise one of the instruments of good works of our Rule of S. Benedict, which is to rejoice and solace the poor. But afterwards the Mother judged it not prudent to trust entirely to the statements

of these good people, who sometimes feigned needs they did not have. She begged the late M. Pallu (*vide* p. 269), who was then our Doctor and who died two years after our arrival in this House, to ascertain their needs, and to ask freely for whatever he judged necessary.

'M. Pallu was one of the Hermits who had retired to this House, where he served not only the Nuns after their return and the servants, but all the sick poor of the country with incredible kindness. This was why our Mother begged him to undertake this commission, because, constantly going many leagues about the country-side to visit the sick, he could inform himself better than any one of their wants and see for himself if they were genuine. Moreover she was so convinced of his charity and his prudence that she believed one could not do better than follow his advice. For which reason she gave him full authority to dispose of everything in regard to the poor. He, nevertheless, would not ever avail himself of it. As he was very humble, he would do nothing save by order of the Mother, or, in her absence, of some of us. He said, à propos of this, that he mistrusted himself: that he was afraid of following his own inclination, by giving too much or too little, and that his safeguard lay in obedience.

'Such were the instructions and the example which the Mother Angélique gave us in respect of charity. . . .

'As regards separation and remoteness from the world, she had conceived so great an idea, on coming here, of what she hoped to establish, that she proposed to see no secular persons whatsoever, not even her near relatives, unless it were persons wholly given to God, without hold on the world. She observed this as much as she could, and until those to whom she had given power over her soul obliged her to do otherwise. I recollect that in the beginning, when one saw as yet no one, a lady, the sister of one of our best friends, to whom the House was greatly indebted, and M. Arnauld in particular' (it was the sister of a friend who had given him shelter during the storm of the *Fréquente Communion*), 'proposed to come and see both him and the Mother Angélique. M. Arnauld, who was informed of it, bade me beg the Mother urgently from him to receive this lady kindly, and to be so good as to entertain her and show her all possible signs of affection and gratitude. I took my message to the Mother, who replied: 'Well and good, she should be shown the best possible entertainment, and we should take great care to make her comfortable, but she would not see her, and it was enough for her to see M. Arnauld.' I urged her, so far as I possibly

could with respect, to grant what he asked, and showed her I could not make up my mind to take this answer to her brother M. Arnauld. But she remained firm, telling me with tears in her eyes that we ought to try and keep people away from this House, and that she had no mind to attract them by her attentions. She said also that, should it happen that the near relatives of any Sister here wanted greatly to see their daughter or their sister, she would rather take the said Sister with her to Paris to see them, than give occasion for the world to look us up in our solitude.

‘We have known her also refuse the parlour to some of her very near relatives (such as her nephew M. de Pomponne, son of M. d’Andilly), although she greatly loved them; but she said it was enough to see M. Arnauld and M. d’Andilly who dwelt in this House. She did not wish *Messieurs* her nephews (M. le Maître and M. de Séricourt) and other pious persons who had retired here, . . . she did not wish, I say, that they should have any communication with the Nuns, unless it were necessary for the household and the affairs to which they attended. Even then she desired it to be with great circumspection, and that we should take heed and curtail all words which might be superfluous. I do not speak here of frivolous discourse and news of the world; for it may well be believed that these were completely banished, our Mother having always taught us to repress them whatever the occasion; and they would have seemed to us almost a crime.

‘Such was the spirit which the Mother Angélique established in the new House of Port Royal des Champs. But we must take up the thread of events. On the 29th of September in the same year 1648, M. de Sainte-Beuve’ (Confessor then at Port Royal), ‘commissioned by the Superior to perform our election, came to this House des Champs to take the votes of the eligible Sisters who were here, and carried them sealed with the seal of the House, to represent them at the election of the Mother Superior, which took place in the Monastery of Paris on the Sunday following, October the 4th. Our very dear Mother Marie Angélique *Arnauld*, who had gone to Paris a short time previously, was elected and continued for the third time. On the 13th of November of the same year she came back from the Monastery of the town after her new election and took possession here with the usual ceremonies and to the great joy of all her Sisters. As for her, she said to me—our narrator was herself made Prioress at Port Royal des Champs—‘that she took comfort in the hope that she would obey in commanding, and in the thought that it could not last more than three

years ; although that did not, she said, prevent her from being in great peril unless God showed her grace and pity.

'We have seen that the love of the Mother Angélique for silence and for solitude had induced her to close at first the grilles of the parlours ; but there came soon an occasion when her charity obliged her to open all the gates of the Monastery. This was the first "*Guerre de Paris*" in 1649, when a number of persons of all sorts and conditions sought refuge here.'

First a country neighbour begged her to take in her daughter and a young friend, and herself followed shortly after with the daughters of her farm-tenants. Again, the Abbess of the Convent of Gif, not far distant, thought Port Royal safer than her own convent and begged Angélique to take in her and a number of her nuns, who meantime were sheltered in a château at Chartres.

'The Mother Angélique being touched with compassion, at once opened to them her heart, and promised to open to them the door of the Monastery.

'She promptly caused two rooms to be emptied, and seven or eight beds prepared in them, although we had then very little space or furniture, any more than other things, because it was not a time for laying in provisions, and there were so many extra people here. But the charity of the Mother Angélique never allowed her to consider the difficulties which arose, when she was engaged in undertaking something for the assistance of persons in need. She did it with so great fullness of heart, and an affection so tender and so ardent, that it seemed as though one was greatly obliging her by asking help which she could give. Her example had so much power over her Sisters, that they rejoiced in hastening to inconvenience themselves on these occasions.'

After all, owing to the prejudice already rife against Port Royal, the invasion from this quarter, was not large :—

'Although the Mother was prepared to receive all the Religious of Gif who were in this Château whence they had written, only three came, the Mother d'Aligre, daughter of the late Chancellor d'Aligre, an old Nun who was cellarer, and another young one. They brought with them one of their pupils, niece of one of our friends. Our Mother thinking truly they would have no convenience for coming, sent them her brother M. d'Andilly's carriage, and an escort of *ces*

Messieurs who were our own guard. She received them with every possible token of kindness, in such a manner that they were very pleased and were undeceived as to what had been told them. For the Mother d'Aligre owned to us that, since they had been prejudiced against us, they had scarcely been able to make up their minds to come ; and that their Sisters would never consent to accompany them because of the apprehension they had all conceived from the tales told them of us, the falsity of which they saw for themselves. And she told us she would never have dared hope to find such charity as there was in the House, nor to see everything so different from what they had been given to understand. They testified to us also great comfort at having come.'

Now too the Mother Angélique was able, without prudential restraint, to ease her heart of love upon the poor. Their misery during this war of Princes was too great to leave room for false tales :—

' But the charity of the Mother Angélique was not satisfied with having received all these persons who came to take refuge here, to set their life and their honour in surety. She would have wished also to secure all the poor peasants from the violence and pillage of the soldiers. As she could not harbour their persons, she resolved at least to give shelter to their belongings and to their grain. Accordingly a number of these poor folk brought us all they had, corn, peas, beans, utensils, boxes, packets, and even their bread, which they came to ask for as they needed it, so that there was not enough room in the House, already filled up with people, to put away what they were continually bringing. The Mother decided that in this need a part of their grain and of their boxes might be placed in the lower end of our Church. On this account it was necessary to open constantly the great door of our Church, which was then a closed door, and even to leave it open sometimes the greater part of the day, while these poor people came to bring their corn, or to take it again when they wanted to grind it, which obliged us to keep guard.

' The amount of time all this took is incredible, and how it tired us. But our dear Mother encouraged us in this exercise of charity, and was often the first to receive what was brought, and to have all arranged. She had labels written upon everything, to avoid confusion. The quantity of things brought was so great that all the aisles of the Church were filled with them, besides the other places where one put all one could. The Monastery often called to our minds the Ark of Noah,

in which was all manner of cattle. For on whatever side one turned, one found only horses, sheep, and cows. Our courtyard was all full of poultry. These poor people would come and beg us eagerly to buy them,—they told us to give them what we would and nothing at all if we liked, because they would rather we had them than the soldiers; we bought them at market prices, to please them, for we had no need of them and were the rather inconvenienced by the number we had. We also kept some in trust, to return after the war.

‘What increased our work in this matter was that these good people came at all hours to seek what they wanted, without ceremony, the quite extraordinary charity of our Mother having made them take this liberty. Some came by four or five in the morning, and others all day long. Our Mother frequently was at the pains of escorting them herself to take what they needed.

‘Certain persons of distinction, who loved this House, and who saw matters more humanly than she, did what they could to dissuade her from guarding the belongings of the peasants. They warned her that she was placing the Monastery in great danger of pillage, and that the leaders and officers of the army were known, on good authority, to have said that, since they found nothing more in the villagers’ houses, they would come and pillage the Monastery whither they had transported all they had. To the which she replied confidently, that she would not fail in the charity she owed to these poor people in this matter, and that, if the Monastery were pillaged for having exercised this charity, she would rejoice; but that she did not think it and was convinced, on the contrary, that God would preserve us by the prayers of these poor people. The result showed that God gave her according to her faith.

‘Since the greater part of the peasants were ruined during this time, an incredible number of poor besieged us for alms. Our Mother had soup made, to give to all. She desired it to be good and well seasoned. She often took the trouble of going to the kitchen to see that nothing was spared. On account of the large quantity needed, it could not be done without great outlay. So large a number of poor people came, that fourteen or fifteen cauldrons barely sufficed. When our Mother thought it not good, she made the cooks taste it in her presence, and asked if they could eat it like that, and how they had the conscience to give to the poor what they would not eat themselves. She had it rectified at once, with fricasseed onions if it had not enough taste, and adding what was wanted. She had bread given also to many of the poor,



LA DISTRIBUTION DES AUMOSNES DE PORT-ROYAL DES CHAMPS



LES RELIGIEUSES DE PORT-ROYAL DES CHAMPS PANSANT LES MALADES

DISTRIBUTION OF ALMS AT PORT ROYAL, AND NUNS ATTENDING
TO THE SICK

From engravings by Madeleine Hortemel

as at all times,—distributing weekly to poor families one or two loaves, according to their need. But during this season of the war, the increased wretchedness stirred proportionately her compassion and her charity.

'She was constantly thinking what she could do for the comfort and solace of so many poor. We had gathered that same year a great quantity of fruit. It occurred to her to have great baskets of pears and apples distributed to them every day after their soup. We had also laid in a good stock of beetroot for ourselves and our people, because at the beginning of this war one could procure nothing. Thus we got through part of Lent with these vegetables, peas, and milk. Our Mother, seeing that Lent was passing and that it was becoming easier to get provisions, caused this beetroot also to be given to the poor.

'The eagerness with which they received these little comforts is incredible. When our Mother knew, it rejoiced her, and she said to us with delight: "God has shown us the grace to-day of doing what He enjoins in His Scripture, of 'rejoicing the entrails of the poor'."

'One had great difficulty in providing bread and soup, and it gave great labour to the Sisters, especially those who opened the door; so much so that one of the Sisters who was very strong, and for that reason employed in it more than others, fell ill of fatigue and exhaustion. One scarcely had time to sleep; these good folk came so early and so late to get all they required that it took up an immense time. But what called for admiration was that our Mother did all with amazing joy, without tiring of it all, long as it lasted. On the contrary she exhorted all these poor to be of good courage and have patience, offering what they suffered to God Who beholds labour and pain.

'The compassion and kindness she showed them emboldened them to ask for all their small needs. And if some poor sick person had a fancy to eat anything, she had only to make it known to this charitable Mother who immediately provided it. One might record many instances of her care and charity in solacing and gratifying them. . . .

'A poor sick woman whom she aided had a fancy during Lent to eat roast veal; and believed it would effect her cure. When our Mother heard this, through M. Pallu, our doctor, she had it at once prepared for her and sent all hot between two plates. At which the good woman greatly rejoiced, and she found it so good that from that day she began to recover. . . .

'Although the trust which the Mother Angélique had in

God was in no need of miracles, she was capable of obtaining them without asking. In truth all the aid she received from Him through her faith, in this time of war and on many other occasions, might pass for miraculous, since it can only be attributed to a quite special providence whereby God rewarded her faith and her charity. This appears especially on an occasion which is narrated by the very person who was ocular witness. We will record it here. The said person is the Mother Angélique de S. Jean *Arnauld*. . . .

‘In the year 1649, during the war of Paris, I was, says the Mother Angélique de S. Jean, at Port Royal des Champs with the Mother Angélique. I witnessed, with all the others, the extreme charity she manifested there in a thousand ways, which I will not report here. But I cannot omit recording a thing known indeed to many at the time, but to which I alone can testify as having seen it, since it took place in my presence. I do not wish to give it a name. Let it be called as one will, an effect of the providence of God or a miracle. I will relate only what occurred.

‘One afternoon I was with the Mother Angélique in a little room, called after S. Monica, near the fire: it was Lent, if I am not mistaken. Madame Desseaux, our portress (the widow of a bourgeois of the neighbourhood, who had charge of the housekeeping for twenty-five years in either Convent), who was then living in the House . . . came up to this room where we were sitting to tell the Mother a poor man was at the gate, burdened with a family in great distress, and asking help. The Mother said to her: “Well, my Daughter, what can we do for him? What have we got?” Madame Desseaux said to her: “My Mother, we have nothing.” “What!” answered the Mother, “nothing at all?” “We have,” answered Madame Desseaux, “a single piece of twenty-nine *sols*.” “Give it him,” answered the Mother, “for this poor man it is something, and for us nothing; for we cannot live upon that. We are accustomed to rest upon God’s Providence.” It was done then and there, without reply.

‘A quarter of an hour later Madame Desseaux came again in search of the Mother in the same place, whence we had not stirred, to bring some other message from the gate. So soon as the Mother saw her, she said: “Well, my Daughter, what of the poor man? Did he go away satisfied?” She replied, “Yes, and that he had heartily thanked God for the charity of the House.” The Mother said to her: “But you, what will you do? For we have no longer anything.” “My Mother,” replied Madame Desseaux, “you said that the providence of God would provide.” At this moment the

Mother remembered that she had something she had not thought of, and she said to Madame Desseaux: "Truly! I believe we are not as poor as I thought, and that I shall give you back more than you have just given to the poor man. I remember that some time ago I was given two rolls of little five *sols* pieces, and used up one of them; I must still have the other somewhere."

'She searched at once in our presence in all her pockets, and in effect she produced with satisfaction this roll, and promptly opened it to count what was in it. But if ever one saw a person surprised, it was she, when, on unfolding the paper, she found gold instead of silver. Never have I seen such a change in her countenance. For, contrary to her nature, which gave her constant presence of mind, and provided her ready answers to everything, she was so dumb-founded that, without saying a word or venturing even to look at us, she reddened and looked down for a time, until we, no less surprised, urged her to own that God had rendered it her back a thousandfold.

'She said then that she could not understand it. She was in truth so taken aback that she did not yet know what to answer, to take from us the idea of a miracle. We agreed that, whatever it was, one must thank God. And I remember that her embarrassment and confusion made me sorry for her, so that I did not venture at first to urge her too much to speak, besides that I was myself in a certain amazement, which deprived me of freedom to make much reflection. This gold was then counted, and was found to amount to twenty-nine *demi-louis* of gold, in place of the piece of twenty-nine *sols*. This is the exact truth of what happened.

'When the Mother had recovered from her surprise, we strongly urged her to speak. Then she recovered her usual presence of mind, and told us that one must not trouble so much as to where this gold came from, that certainly some one must have given it her and she have forgotten it, since she had found it. We said to her she had not forgotten the five *sols* pieces, and that this would have equally remained in her memory; that this was not a time in which she could keep so much gold as to forget it in the hourly need for money. To all which she replied that, nevertheless, she must have had it; and she began even to try and say that she had some idea of gold having been given her. But she did not finish and one saw well that she feared to be insensibly led to say something contrary to truth. We told her then that the roll of five *sols* pieces must then be found, if it were not this. She replied that it must be looked for, because she was certain

of having had it. But it was not to be found, however carefully one might look; and neither could one ever get the Mother to say anything else.

'Her very silence was a proof that she had no adequate argument to combat the opinion that God had wished to recompense her faith and her charity in this occurrence; and I am confirmed in it by what happened during her last illness' (the niece writes in 1672). 'One day as she was in the state of somnolence which alarmed the doctors, and which they desired one to fight against,¹ in order to rouse her I began to speak of the miracle of the flour' (Angélique's prayers had once turned bad flour to good, so the nuns said, but she laid the miracle to the score of the cook's perseverance and patience!)² 'and of this one. She asked me what I was thinking of to speak to her about that? I told her I did it because I knew it displeased her, and on that account she would more effectively rouse herself; that, when I spoke of things more agreeable to her, she fell asleep, and that, when I asked where she had got this gold, she had to answer. She replied to me with a smile that I was a veritable Satan, and should let her rest. Had she been able to disabuse me of this error, I believe she would have wanted to do so before she died; and accordingly I had no further doubt that she believed the thing genuine.

'Such is the narrative of one of those extraordinary occurrences whereby God desired at once to reward and to increase the faith of the Mother Angélique. I will now resume the thread of events.

'The charity of our Mother Angélique was accompanied by wisdom and prudence. She did not rest satisfied with aiding the poor people in their need, but she took also great care to provide for our safety. Every day there were alarms; we were continually threatened that troops would come down upon us and pillage the Monastery. That, however, was not what our Mother feared most, as she was always of the utmost disinterestedness. She would have had far more regret at seeing what our poor peasantry had given us in deposit carried off, than all which belonged to us.

'To show how little she cared about our temporal goods, I will relate what we heard her say on an occasion when some of our Sisters urged her to make a hiding-place for the best things belonging to the Sacristy. She answered forcibly that she never would permit it, because it would be an occasion for the soldiers to remain longer in the Monastery, searching

¹ Cf. *post*, ch. xxv, p. 383.

² *Mémoires pour servir . . .*, vol. ii, p. 191 seq.

for what they did not immediately find. She added even, that, if they did chance to enter, she would rather herself put into their hands all that was of most value, so that they might quickly leave, and not remain a moment longer to look for anything.

But as there was only too much ground, especially for Monasteries, to fear the approach of the soldiers, our Mother begged the greater number of the *Messieurs* who had retired to our farms, to come down here and protect us. Among them were some who had formerly held posts in the army, where they had given proof of their courage and skill, and who could be of great service in defending us should the occasion arise; the more that they might perhaps know some of those who commanded the troops which were in the neighbourhood. They began at once to strengthen those parts of the Monastery where entry would be easiest; and they guarded us with constant vigilance.

But our Mother, and they also, thought this was not enough to assure our safety, unless we had one of the King's Guards, or one from M. le Prince. She thought accordingly of asking for one. Fearing, however, lest we should be given somebody lacking in the piety required for such a place as this, she thought it better to obtain permission from M. le Prince for one of *ces Messieurs*, who was named to him, to wear the uniform of his Guards, and, since he was known to his Highness, the favour was readily granted.

'I will here narrate a case of the protection given by God to certain women who were at our Grange Farm.

'A troop of soldiers, having gone to this farm to pillage it, found there a widow woman who was in service there, and the wife of our agent at Montigni, who had retired there for greater safety. They began by laying hold of these two women, whom they shut up in a room, leaving some of their comrades to watch them while the others ransacked the house. These poor women were in a state of terror and distress that may be imagined. The agent's wife, who was the youngest and good-looking, turned faint. One of the soldiers, who seemed more humane than the others, was touched by it, and he spoke to his companion to effect her escape. But they would not let the Grange servant go; and, as she tried to escape, they held her back so roughly that she was badly hurt. However, as she continued to struggle, she perceived that they held her only by her belt; she skilfully unfastened it and fled.

'While this was taking place, one of the servants ran quickly to give warning at the Abbey of the arrival of soldiers at the

Grange. When our Guard learnt it, he promptly went up there; and, being a man of rank and very high-spirited, he reproved them with much authority and vigour, and threatened to have them punished for their insolence. On hearing him talk in this manner, and above all on seeing his uniform, they apologized profusely, and quickly withdrew.

'After that our Mother made these women come down here, and lodged them in the outer precincts of the Monastery, that they might not be exposed to such danger. It was found that the fright had made such a strong impression upon the mind of our rent-collector's wife, that she had quite lost her wits, and began to wander. Our Mother, when she learned it, was moved to great pity. She had her bathed, and treated with much care and without stint of anything, so that she entirely recovered and has been very grateful.

'We remained fairly quiet for the rest of the war, without any one doing us harm; to the which I have no doubt the charity of our Mother Angélique greatly contributed. For since she extended it to all sorts of persons, and did good to all to whom she could, she did the same even to the soldiers. On learning that some of them, and among others some in command, had been left ill in the neighbourhood, she sent them soup, remedies, and anything she could for their comfort, whereby she acquired their esteem and their respect.

'The Mother Angélique took great care not only of her Nuns (*ses Filles*) who were with her, but also and no less of those who were in Paris. For, as she was the common Mother of all, and bore us all in her heart, there was nothing she did not do for the relief and ease of the one set as of the other. . . .'

The tale, however, is too long, and we must omit the detailed story of how, during this first Fronde, the nuns in Paris were guarded, under the watchful eye of Angélique at a distance, by her faithful coadjutrix, our Mother Agnès; how the younger nuns were removed, for greater safety, from the Faubourg S. Jacques, to a friend's house more in the centre of Paris; how they transported thither, without the external aid of the cloister, the true Port Royal spirit of seclusion, charity and silence. The older nuns meanwhile remained in the convent, under the charge of the Mother Marie des Anges and Sœur Anne Eugénie de l'Incarnation (Arnauld), heeding little of the perils to which their situation on the borders of the city exposed them. Among these we may note Madelon, youngest of the

Arnauld sisters, won in radiant childhood, by Angélique's influence and by a vision, to the conventual life. She, now among these older nuns held fit to risk perils of soldiery, died at this time from an illness of long standing :—

‘ Although her malady, which had lasted several years, had so changed her complexion and her countenance that they were not recognizable, she appeared after death so beautiful, and had so good a colour, that our Sisters found it hard to believe she was dead. They concluded this beauty was not natural, but a token of her bliss.’¹

¹ *Relation . . . par la Mère . . . de Ligni . . .*, Mémoires pour servir . . . , vol. ii. p. 58.

CHAPTER XXI

The Second Fronde.—Temporary return to Paris.

WITH the brief peace matters at the convent resumed their normal course. But when the second Fronde presently followed upon the first, the convent in the country, now the most exposed to peril, was judged unsafe for women, and Angélique, leaving her dear solitude to the care again of the hermits, brought her nuns, some fifty, thence back to Paris, and all reunited in the convent of the Faubourg. Crowded as was the community in that outgrown house, it became a place of refuge for an incredible number of fugitive nuns, even of whole convents, flocking to Paris for safety.

Narrative of Sœur Madeleine de Ste Agnès de Ligni
(continued).

‘The Mother Angélique arrived at Port Royal in Paris, very calm, whatever her regret may have been at leaving her retreat, which was the sole attachment she had in the world,—but she had none to anything, from the moment she saw the command of God. On her arrival here, a Sister asked her if she were not very tired, because it was always she who saw to everything on such occasions. She replied gaily: “Not in the least; nothing is any trouble to me, except when I am not sure of the will of God, and have to act by my own judgement; on this occasion, since M. Singlin, who was with us, decided what was to be done, I had only to obey God who spoke through him, and that never tires me.”

‘It would not be possible to note all the acts of charity which the Mother Angélique showed to divers persons during this period of the second war, which lasted a long while. The Sister Angélique de S. Jean made at the time some “Observations”, which I will give here as she gave them me, written in her own hand.

‘As the approach of the armies of the King and of the Princes imperilled all the Religious Houses of Nuns in the country round about Paris, the majority left their Convents to enter the town,

'The Nuns of Notre-Dame de Liesse, whose House was at the extreme end of the Faubourg S. Germain, and very isolated' (it was in the Rue de Sèvres), 'were warned that they were not safe. When the Mother Angélique heard it, she was in great trouble, because she would gladly have taken them in ; but a permission from their Superior was needed, which it was very difficult to obtain. On this account, she had prayers said here, that God would help them and bring them out of the peril they were in. However, some friends of the House . . . who had solicited and obtained their "obedience", came to tell the news to our Mother, who, full of joy, fell upon her knees to thank God, with as much feeling of love as if they had been her own Sisters, although she had never seen these poor girls and knew them only on account of their great poverty, living as they had for some years only on the charity of friends of the House. As she left the parlour, and chanced to meet Mme d'Aumont ' (a lady who lived, as 'benefactress', in the convent) 'and some of the Sisters, she said to them with a gay and open countenance : "Here is good news, my children." They to whom she spoke fancied it concerned peace and asked if some agreement had been come to. She answered them : "No, but that these poor Sisters of Liesse were to come on the morrow, May the 2nd, to the number of eight Nuns, and that room must be found to accommodate them", notwithstanding that the House was increased by all the Community of Port Royal des Champs, by the Mother Prioress of Gif and the Mother de S. Maur, Madame Aumont's sister, whom the Mother had taken in at that same time and for the same reason, the war having brought them to Paris. For as both were ill and inconveniently lodged in the House where they were, they had leave to come to this ; as also another Religious from Chanteloup, one from S. Rhemi, one from Belhomer ; so that in less than ten or twelve days, the Mother Angélique burdened herself with thirteen Religious, at a time when everybody sought to get rid of them.

'On the morrow, May the 2nd, she spent the day preparing beds in the building of the Princesse de Guémené' (who had, it will be remembered, a little dwelling in the convent) 'to put in it our Sisters, whom she made leave their cells to give them to these Religious she was expecting. Two days after, when she had held them a brief discourse, she said to us, after having left them, that she was very pleased with them, that they were true sheep ; that it seemed as though God gave a special blessing upon the Religious taken in from elsewhere, more than to others. Whereupon, it having been objected that it seemed, by what she said, as though she would not admit

we were submissive, and made it seem we were less obedient to her, she replied that such was not her meaning, and that she would be wrong to complain on that score of any one; that everybody was a lamb to her, and that she did not know how it was; but that God showed her the grace of greatly easing the burden of her charge, through the trust in her which He set in the minds of all persons, whom she found ever pliable and submissive, and that she had reason to thank God for it. This only shows how great a gift of Conduct she had received.

'A few days after, she took in also the sister of M. le Roi, Canon of Notre-Dame, who was Nun at Collinances, a Priory of Fontevrault, and four others from Chanteloup and a Novice of the same House.

'At this same time the Mother Angélique, learning from the Mother Prioress of Gif, who was with us, that her niece, a girl of twenty-four, Religious in the same Abbey of Gif, had fallen ill of the small-pox at the house of Mme de Miramion,—who had taken her as companion to her daughter, another Religious of Gif who was at home, the greater number of the Nuns having gone to their relatives—, and knowing that the said lady could not well keep her, because she had children in her house who might catch the complaint, which put the good Prioress in great distress, not knowing what to do for the safety of her niece (about whom the Abbess, who should have been more concerned than she, did not trouble at all), the Mother Angélique had, as I have said, no sooner learnt it, than she made good the indifference of the one and the incapacity of the other, her charity having long accustomed her to bear the burdens of others. She at once gave the order that the girl should be brought to a room just opposite the gate of the Convent, which belonged to a woman known to the House, and of which use was sometimes made. She gave her the charge of this patient, and provided for her also a Lay Sister. . . . The Mother commissioned Mme Vitard¹ to furnish the room with everything necessary to a sick person. . . . Seeing the great gratitude of the Mother Prioress of Gif, for so wide a charity,—which surprised even us, accustomed as we were to the Mother's manner of acting on such occasions—, she said to us, to lessen our opinion of it, that she had no scruple in amply furnishing this little room with all things required, and expressly purchased, because she would want them all at Port Royal des Champs, when we returned there. It is her custom to find such shifts, to cover what she does, when she thinks one notices and admires her on like occasions.'

¹ Mme Vitard, pious aunt of Racine, the dramatist, aided in the good works of the convent.

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The outcome of Angélique's charity on this occasion was a fruit more precious to her even than the restoration to health of this sick nun. The thoughtless young Abbess of Gif, obliged by mere courtesy to acknowledge such kindness shown to one of her nuns, was brought thereby within the sphere of Angélique's influence, and, an Abbess wrongfully appointed through the exercise of worldly influence, became one of those who, following Angélique's example, voluntarily resigned an ill-gotten charge.

The Convent of Gif lay at no great distance from Port Royal des Champs, and, as we saw, a few of its nuns had tasted Angélique's hospitality there during the first troubles, becoming disabused of prejudices entertained against that community. To the grief of our Mother, as successor to a worthy Abbess, a young girl of twenty-two was appointed, with no claim save family influence. She it was whom Angélique now won to penitence.

The Prioress, finding her niece in serious danger, wrote to this Abbess to tell her of the Mother Angélique's kindness, and begged her to send a Lay Sister to help nurse. Madame de Gif, of gentle breeding if only of the world, replied with courteous thanks and offers to repay expenses, and presently came herself to bring the Lay Sister asked for:—

'She did not think she should herself enter the House, but the Mother Angélique proposed it to her, from the pure motive of zeal that this Religious might be made worthy of her charge, thinking it might be of service to her to see the order of the House, and persons who perhaps might prove useful to her. She did it with more kindness than can be told. As she went to the door to receive her, she said to the Prioress, with inexpressible grace, "I am going to make so much of her" (*Je m'en vais tant la caresser*); which is the more worthy consideration, that she had in view nothing save the welfare of that Abbey, where it was much feared that this new rule of a girl of twenty-two would be very prejudicial to the good order established by the late Abbess. It was from this sole consideration that the Mother offered to take her in, and that on a day when we were already much encumbered, there being in the Convent nineteen Nuns from Belle-Chasse, admitted that day, May the 23rd, 1652, . . . so that, counting those of Belle-Chasse, and those of Gif whom the Abbess had with her,

we had twenty-seven extra Nuns for dinner, without counting those already admitted to stay.

'On Friday, May the 24th, six Religious from Montmartre were admitted. The four first, who had never seen the House nor the Mother Angélique, were so pleased with the one and the other, and above all so enchanted with the manner in which the Mother spoke to them, that they could not leave her when they had to go. They spoke of her, among themselves and to us, with an admiration totally unaffected, acknowledging that she had completely won their hearts, and that they thought us infinitely happy to have such a person. The Mother had narrated to them a part of her life, that at least relating to her entry into the House, the reform of Maubuisson, &c. Unhappily I was not present, which I most deeply regret.

'It appears', continues our Sister Agnès *de Ligny*, 'from these Observations of my Sister Angélique de S. Jean, that she had begun to keep exact count of the Religious received. But the number became so great that she grew tired of it. And it would have been difficult indeed for her to continue, because there were several of us Nuns told off to receive them; and, when she was with one set of these stranger Nuns, she frequently did not see those whom other Sisters escorted.'

'I think it may not be superfluous to narrate here what gave rise to these frequent entries; for at first no one entered without express permission.

'It was this. The Nuns of the congregation of Notre-Dame of the town of Etampes, having come to Paris, like many other Communities in the country, who were not safe in their Monasteries, reached the Faubourg de S. Jacques about nine in the evening, on the Eve of the Holy Trinity (May the 25th). They were in extreme anxiety, not knowing where to find shelter for the night, for they were all to retire to their relatives and could not seek their homes at that hour, when it was too dark to find their way. Not knowing what to advise, they fell into distress and wept. But one of them, who had been formerly in the service of Madame le Maître, sister of the Mother Angélique, before she became Nun, remembered, when she saw Port Royal, the charity which she knew to be practised there. She told the Sisters not to distress themselves, for they were close to a House which she knew well enough to hope they would certainly not be refused shelter if they applied for it. The straits they were in made them soon resolve to do so, although they were very prejudiced against Port Royal.

'When the Mother Angélique was told that a whole Convent of Nuns begged her hospitality, and were without shelter at

that hour and exposed to all the perils of a time of war, she was as much touched with pity as though they had been her own Sisters, although she did not know them in the least. Reflecting that she could not lodge them on the outside, where was neither room nor furniture for so many, she thought that charity, which is above all laws, dispensed her of the need to have a permission for allowing them to enter within the Monastery, and she received them with a warmheartedness that cannot be described. And as the House was exceedingly full, as well with our two Communities as with Nuns from other Monasteries, who had obtained leave to pass with us the period of the war, she took them to the apartment of Mme la Princesse de Guémené, who had kindly lent it to us, seeing the need we were in, which had induced us to put beds even in the parlours.

'Preparations were made at once to get supper for these good Nuns, who were twenty-five in number; and it fortunately so happened that our Sisters had prepared beforehand a part of our dinner for the next day, so as not to lose the sermon and the ceremony of Sister Euphémie (Pascal) taking the Veil, which was to be that day, the Feast of the Holy Trinity, so it came very à propos to serve for our new guests. They were made as comfortable as possible, with great joy and goodwill; which transpired above all when it was a question of preparing their beds, their quarters being quite destitute of furniture, and no great surplus in a House with so many extra people. All our Sisters let it be well seen on this occasion that they were the true daughters of so charitable a Mother, and that her example as well as her words was deeply engraven in their heart. The majority of the Sisters, who had already gone to bed and were asleep, aroused by hearing more commotion in the dormitory than usual, at a time when all was to be feared, came out of their cells to see what it could be. When they learnt that it was not an army of soldiers which had given this little alarm, but the arrival of a troop of Religious in need of rest and without beds, they brought at once whatever they could for the comfort of these good Sisters, with incredible swiftness and zeal. One met nothing but Nuns burdened with their pillows and blankets, their mattresses and bed-spreads, all delighted to inconvenience themselves a little at this opportunity of practising charity. There were also seven boarders who were being taken back to their relatives in Paris, and some other secular persons, who did not enter within the cloister, and the Mother Angélique strongly recommended that they should be taken care of. M. d'Andilly, who was lodged without, busied himself more than anybody

to carry out this injunction ; and it was he himself who begged the Mother Angélique to let all these persons be kept, and kindness shown to the Seculars as to the Religious ; which he had no difficulty in obtaining.

‘On the next day, that of the Holy Trinity, these good Nuns attended the Convent Mass and the ceremony of taking the Veil. There were present also several other Nuns who had come to spend the Feast with us : so that all the seats in our Choir were full.

‘Most of these Nuns from Etampes departed after the ceremony, and did not dine at Port Royal ; but there were, without them, so great a number that they nearly filled the Refectory, so that most of our Sisters had a place only at the second Refectory. I do not know how God provided for the wants of so many persons, but, in spite of so many extra people who had not been expected, there did not fail to be enough for everybody.

‘The brief time that the Religious from Etampes spent at Port Royal served to undeceive them ; for they were then so prejudiced against what was called “Port Royal”, that, although they could not but be under obligation for the kindness shown them, they could scarcely acknowledge it with good grace, and several let us see that they suspected us and were eager to get away. We have known for some years past that their opinion has quite changed.’

‘The Mother Angélique wrote immediately to M. the Archbishop of Paris (Jean François de Gondi) to account to him for what she had done, in the confidence that he would not disapprove of her having opened the door of the Monastery to these good Nuns, in a case of such great necessity, without his permission. M. the Archbishop, who had a quite special regard and benevolence for the Mother Angélique, let her know that he was much pleased with her conduct. He gave her a general permission to admit any Nuns who should come ; and from that day one saw nothing but processions of most of the Nuns who had taken refuge in Paris, coming to Port Royal. Soon we were obliged to open the door four or five times a day to admit them. There came frequent little troops from Montmartre, from Chelles, from Gif, from Malnoue, . . . and from various other monasteries of almost every Order. For in addition to those who were living in Community, we also often admitted such as had retired to their relatives, and who were very glad to come and spend the Feast-days with us. One counted sometimes as many as twenty, thirty, and even forty, of different Orders. Most of them came from love and

for edification, and some from curiosity; but in the end they all appeared exceedingly pleased with the Mother Angélique and with the Community.

'The Mother received all these Nuns with equal kindness. They accompanied us to the Church, to the Refectory, to the Conference. Coming as they did at all hours, they were always at once offered refreshment. The Mother insisted too on their taking it, unless they were under obligation to fast, for she could not bear their leaving us until she had shown them every possible kindness. She spoke to them with an openness of heart and goodness which at once gained their affections. She discoursed to them only upon things which might be of service to them, turn them more to God, and give them greater contempt for the world and love of their vocation. She represented to them the duties to which this pledges us, with such zeal and vigour that they were enchanted and were never weary of listening.

'I remember that I chanced to be one day in the room with five or six Religious from Chelles. These were Madame Duval, Madame de Bois-ruffin, Madame Brandon and several others. She talked to them for some time about reform, toleration, and suffering one's neighbour, about charity to the poor, and other matters on which they had asked her opinion. I cannot possibly depict the ardour with which she spoke, any more than the gratification they expressed to us, not only in words, but by their actions and mien. I was between two of these good women who kept turning to me with a smiling countenance, and every now and again they embraced me, with the remark: "Oh! you are lucky, to have such a good Mother!"

'To give a precise account of these admissions and all that took place in them, one should have noted it down at the time. I can only say generally, that they were so frequent, or rather so constant, that, as I was one of those engaged in conversing with the Nuns and escorting them about, I had scarcely time to go and pray a little to God, and repeat the office, except when they desired to go with us, which they did at any rate upon Feast-days, when they spent the whole day at Port Royal. Nevertheless the Mother always received them joyously and with inexpressible goodwill; without ever testifying to us any weariness at the numbers who came, and without minding the burden of expense which they entailed, at a time when one had difficulty in living and obtaining provisions. We know that she did great service to some of these Religious who placed special trust in her, and especially to certain well disposed Abbesses, who conversed with her

frequently in private and consulted her, whether for the government of their House or for their own conduct.'

These we need not name in detail. The instance of the young Abbess of Gif we already know. She, as we learn from Angélique's own letters, among other sources, renounced her lightly acquired Abbey under this influence, and began a new religious life as novice of Port Royal. Among the older Abbesses now hospitably received in the convent was one, Madame de la Tremouille, who had come under Angélique's influence years before at Lys (*vide* chap. VII), while one aged Mother visited Port Royal who was Angélique's forerunner in reform:—

'Madame the Abbess of Montmartre also desired to pay a visit to the Mother Angélique, although so aged and so feeble that she could not stand and had to be carried in a chair. She testified great regard and affection for the Mother Angélique. She said to her, among other things, that they were the two first to reform their Houses, and that God had sent them at the same time to work in His vineyard. Our Mother gave her to understand that she was far from comparing herself with her, who had been the first to reform, and that she was but her little Novice. To which Madame de Montmartre rejoined, it was true she had begun first; and that she was the older; but that the Daughter had since far outstripped the Mother.'

It was not, however, all cates and ale for the nuns so hospitably entertained. The Mother Angélique was nothing if not frank, and did not let pass in silence, even in her guests, obvious infringements of monastic virtue. One of her nuns, Sœur Anne Marie de Sainte-Eustoquie *de Flecelles de Bregy*, writing of the freedom of speech which endeared her only the more to some at least of the Community, cites an instance:—

'Among the graces which our very dear and worthy Mother, the Mother Marie Angélique, had received from God, that which I especially observed and most admired was her extreme charity, and the all-holy freedom with which she spoke. She showed souls their faults, and the things God asked of them, with a vigour one felt came truly from the Spirit of God, and which one could not resist. But what is remarkable is that, although by nature one is more afraid and less open with

persons who act thus, when they do it by the impulse of their own mind, her freedom and vigour, on the contrary, since they were effects of the power of the Holy Spirit, instead of producing estrangement, opened the heart and bred closer union with her. I experienced it myself, when I was only a boarder in this House. For she reproved me once for something with great vigour, and in a way my pride found hard to endure. It hurt me at first, but never had I loved this dear, dear Mother so tenderly as from that day; and I seemed to myself of some value since she took care of me. I have found ever since that, when she spoke to the Novitiate or elsewhere with this force, it united me to her the more.

‘She used this freedom, not only in respect of persons of this House, but also of those from without. I have known many instances in the parlour when she was with persons who desired to see her. Among many others, I observed one notable case of this kind. Some eight or nine years ago’ (at the time this Sister writes) ‘during the final disturbances of Paris, which attracted hither many stranger Nuns, all of whom she received with unparalleled goodness, there came one who was very carefully dressed. She had an exceedingly neat habit, busks in her scapulary, and gloves on her hands, with a mien little in accordance with Religious simplicity. Directly she entered the room, the Mother, seeing her in this condition, felt moved with ardent zeal for Religious discipline. Almost before greeting her, she reproved her severely for being so elaborately dressed; and, removing her busk and her gloves, she flung them upon a little bed which stood near, saying to her: “My Daughter, I cannot permit our Sisters to see such an example.” Then she spoke admirably to her about the obligations of the Religious Life. This poor Sister was speechless all this time, whether in admiration of the Mother’s generous virtue or because filled with confusion. Afterwards the Mother had refreshments brought, and spoke to her as well as to the others who were there with her customary kindness.¹

‘There came also during this same period,’ it is again recorded, ‘another Nun of our Order, who had long hair plaited like a secular person. The Mother saw little of her, and did not notice it. But when we told her, after the Nun had gone, she said: “You were very wrong not to have called my attention to it. I can assure you that I would have cut off her hair before she had left this House.”’

¹ *Relation de la Sœur Anne-Marie de Sainte-Eustoquie de Flecelles de Bregy: Sur les Instructions que la Mère Angélique donnait à ses Filles, Mémoires pour servir . . .*, vol. ii, p. 574 seq.

CHAPTER XXII.

Sœur Jacqueline de Sainte-Euphémie Pascal.

IN the midst of the stir and bustle caused by these daily refugees, one of the rarest spirits of Port Royal, Jacqueline Pascal, took the veil.

This sister of the great Pascal, who in childhood rivalled, it is said, her marvellous brother in gifts of the intellect as of personal charm, had come into touch as a young girl with the movement set on foot by Saint-Cyran and Jansen and, together with all her family, had been stirred to ardent piety. Visiting Port Royal, she had found it a convent where, as she told her elder sister Madame Perier, 'one could reasonably be a Nun.'¹

From that time her mind was set upon the veil; she lived in nun-like seclusion at home until, at her father's death, she was free to accomplish her desire. Then she entered Port Royal; but at the last an unexpected difficulty arose. Her brother, who at first had been all zeal for the project, had now cooled in his spiritual ardour and, himself much engaged in social intercourse, took it unkindly that his one unmarried sister should not tarry with him for a short while at least 'in the world'. Further, when the question of *dot* arose, he, and the married sister Guilberte, Mme Perier, also, opposed Jacqueline's wish to give her share of the paternal inheritance—which could indeed be only with some difficulty separated from theirs—to Port Royal.

The narrative which, interrupting again the course of our tale, we here present to the reader, relates how, this being so, the convent took the matter, and portrays for us, in closest intimacy, the mind of the Mother Angélique. It brings, too,

¹ *Relation de la Vie de la Sœur Jacqueline de Sainte-Euphémie Paschal, jusqu'à son entrée à Port-Royal où elle fit profession en 1651, par Madame Périer sa sœur . . .*, Vies . . . des Religieuses de Port-Royal, vol. ii, p. 347.

for the first time upon the scene that brother Blaise Pascal, later so inseparably connected with Port Royal.

Dated from Paris, June the 10th, 1653, two years after the event, the narrative is addressed to the Mother Marie Dorothée de l'Incarnation, *Le Conte*, Prioress at the time of Port Royal des Champs, and is one of the memoirs already then collected by the nuns to do honour to their Mère Angélique.

*Narrative of Sœur Jacqueline de Sainte-Euphémie Paschal.*¹

'Glory to Jesus in the very Holy Sacrament. From Port Royal this day: June the 10th, 1653.

'I cannot doubt, my very dear Mother, but that your kindness made you take part in the very keen trouble which God sent me at the time of my Profession, perhaps to serve as counterbalance to the exceeding joy I had in it. This it is which impels me in due gratitude to share with you the consolation I received.

'With this purpose I do myself the honour of writing to you. But because it is necessary, in order to give you full understanding of the matter, that you should be informed of what had happened, I have thought well to make a little *abrégé*, which will serve at once to explain it to you and to fulfil the obligation I am under of making public, at least among ourselves (since I am forbidden to spread it further), what I have learnt, by a striking experience, concerning the disinterestedness of this House, the great charity of our Mothers and the purity of their intentions and of their rule, which has been so apparent in my affairs that one needs no other proof to recognize that they look only to God in all matters in which they have to act.

'My conscience urges me, my dear Mother, to render to the truth which I know this witness, which is the more worthy of credit in that it is quite voluntary, and that I dare not even make it public because the modesty of our Mother would never suffer it. This is what prevents my daring to attempt what gratitude and justice demand of me, in fear lest obedience would then deny me the little as yet permissible, since it has not been forbidden; which is, to leave you a little memorial that, under cover of the silence and privacy we keep among us, preserves the memory of what has occurred, which we should otherwise be constrained to let perish; and it shall be the monument of my gratitude, and the faithful witness of the

¹ *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de Port-Royal*, vol. iii, p. 54 seq.

memory that remains to me of the grace I have received, since I can do no more.

‘Know then, my Mother, that, so soon as I had obtained the votes for my Profession, I wrote to my relatives to wind up my affairs and to inform them of the manner in which I wished to dispose of the little property God had given me. I informed them with great freedom and candour that I desired to restore these goods to God, since I was depriving myself of them. For I thought I had full grounds of assurance that they would approve all my designs, and, knowing the depths of my purpose and the disposition of my heart in regard to them, I was so vain as to suppose I could not possibly offend them, whatever I might do. You know that I had some grounds for living in this confidence, seeing what union and friendship there had always been among us.

‘Nevertheless they took acute offence at my purpose, and held that I was doing them a marked injury in wishing to disinherit them in favour of strangers, whom I preferred, they said, to them, although they never had disobliged me. In fine, my dear Mother, they took things in a wholly secular spirit, as persons of the world might have done who did not even know the name of charity, and they looked upon that which I proposed to give to certain persons, of whose need they were not ignorant, as marks of an affection which was to their own prejudice, and they would not recognize the motive which animated me.

‘God no doubt permitted this in order to humiliate us, the one and the other, and make us recognize more and more how little one may build upon the affection of creatures. For I cannot attribute this blindness, if the respect I owe them permit me so to call it, to any other cause than to a secret judgement of God upon us, since they certainly had all too much knowledge of the things of God to have led me to expect that I should find them still so human in a concern of piety and one which, moreover, was of so little consequence and so slightly touched their interests that I had not thought of hesitating a moment in proposing to them this so-called disinheritance, which I desired to make only for God; because I felt assured they would not only approve but would be themselves very glad to take part by their consent in those little charities I had in mind, seeing that they themselves often make such as may be called considerable.

‘But, my dear Mother, all this does not concern you. You must be told only, for the sequel of the tale, that this supposed lack of regard on my part gave them fine occasion for discoursing upon the inconstancy of the human mind, and the instability

of my affection. But well and good had that been all,—they would have exercised their spirit without troubling mine ; but it was not. For they each wrote to me separately, in the same tone, a letter in which, without telling me they were displeased, they nevertheless treated me as though they were so greatly. For all answer to my propositions, they gave me a strict account of my affairs and declared to me that the character of my property was such that I could not dispose of it in any manner whatsoever or in anybody's favour. They brought forward as reason that, in apportioning to us, it had been agreed that our shares should be guarantee conjointly, the one for the other, for whatever should be lacking during a certain time, and other arguments of chicanery which would weary you, and which doubtless would not have been such had they not been out of humour. I know, however, very well that strictly they were true ; but we had not been accustomed to treat one another in this manner.

‘They added that if, notwithstanding, I were to dispose of anything, I should set them at law between themselves, and with those to whom I should give my property, a thing they assured me to be inevitable on account of certain legal formalities which had to be observed. And, to avoid this evil, they informed me that they were about to take steps to have me forbidden to dispose of my property, as no longer having the right, thus restricting me for everything to a small sum of money which I had procured before taking the Veil and which they did not know I had already disposed of in sundry charities.

‘Judge, my dear Mother, I beg you, the state into which these letters, in a tone so different from our customary mode of dealing, put me. They imposed upon me the inevitable necessity either of deferring my Profession four years, in order to release my property from the pledge it was under as guarantee for the other shares of our portion, and without security even then that it would be entirely freed, or of suffering the confusion of being received gratuitously, and of having the pain of doing this injustice to the House. Thus the sorrow I experienced was so violent I cannot sufficiently marvel I did not succumb under it.

‘As soon as the Mother Agnès knew that I was in trouble she sent for me. I gave her to understand that what moved me most keenly was this necessity to which I found myself reduced of either deferring what I had desired so ardently for many years, or of doing it under conditions so hard to me. She said many things which comforted me, as to how one must be affected only by that which is eternal : that all which is but temporal is never irreparable, and does not deserve to be

wept over : that we must reserve our tears for sins, which are the only genuine ills : that all the rest is nothing, and that, when it occurs, one must look to means of extricating oneself instead of wasting time in lament. She added, with her customary kindness, that, if matters were done according to her advice, they would soon be happily terminated ; and that she desired I should leave my affairs as they were, and think only of my Profession without disquieting myself over anything.

She said to me further many other beautiful things, and talked then with more gaiety, forgetting nothing which might sweeten the bitterness I experienced. She said it would be a shame to the House, and incredible to those who knew it, were it said that a Novice ready to make Profession was capable of being distressed by anything whatsoever, but much more so were it known that it was because of finding herself reduced to poverty. Then she strove to make me understand how it was the greatest benefit which could befall me, and she told me that our Mother had never desired anything so much as to have been free to do what she would have wished on making Profession, that she might have been able to give all her goods to the poor, and then be received for charity in an obscure House. To leave no pretext of justification to my sadness, she tried to make me see it as not only more honourable, but even as more advantageous and useful to the House, because, while the love we owe to our neighbour does not permit us to wish he should do us injustice, that which we owe to ourselves should make us rejoice when he does it us.

“There is no earthly advantage,” she went on, “which can compare to that, because there is nothing more profitable to Religion than genuine poverty. It is not always permissible to procure it, but it is always well to desire it, to love it, and to rejoice at whatever may contribute to it. One should tremble, and often be greatly distressed, when one obtains wealth, looking on it as a snare and as the foe of virtue and of the spirit of poverty. And one must rejoice not only when one does not receive what one might claim, but also when that which we already had is snatched from us, because at least we are no longer responsible for it.” In fine, my dear Mother, she employed so many means that she brought me almost to rejoice at all which had most distressed me, and not to dare indulge in other sorrow than that of my compassion for those who had given me the ground. Had I remained in this unconcern I should have been such as the Mother Agnès desired me. But I was too feeble and too much moved to be equal to such strength, and I own to my shame that, an instant after, I returned to my former weakness and my first feelings.

'Afterwards the Mother Agnès made me speak to M. Singlin, to whom I retailed all that had happened, while she was good enough on her part to do the same to our Mother (Angélique). She returned promptly and said to M. Singlin from our Mother that her opinion was: that I ought to resign all my property to my relatives, concerning myself no more about it than if it did not belong to me, letting them control the whole without troubling myself, and thinking of nothing save of making my Profession without burdening myself with any other care. M. Singlin did not at first accede to this view, fearing lest there might be too much high-mindedness and not enough humility in this mode of action, as to which he said to us, with great force, that, after having conquered the insatiable covetousness for riches which reigns almost universally, one must beware carefully of falling into the other extreme, which rests in coveting the consequent honour, in the vanity drawn from subsequent actions, the contempt of all those whom one sees still under its sway, and the ostentation of this virtue; and that, when one has set one's honour in being above the love of riches as others in possessing them, if one does not take heed, one does actions which are in truth all contrary, but are animated by the same principle and the same ambition, which causes some to contend for their right with too much warmth and others to cede it with too great readiness. "One must make oneself in all things," he added, "neutral, and divest oneself of all self-interest, looking only to what justice demands of the one side and the other. And if the persons with whom we deal go wrong, and get carried away to some injustice against us, charity requires us to help them by all the means in our power to recover themselves and return to their duties towards us, even as we should owe them that assistance were it a question of a third person's interest. But one must take heed not to let this deceive us, and to act by a secret cupidity, taking cover under pretext of charity. It must be on the contrary by a desire, free from all self-interest, to see justice done in all things."

'Nevertheless M. Singlin, after reflecting a little, entered into the views of our Mother. For he feared lest this opposition, so unreasonably shown by my relatives, were a sign that they had some pledge on the property, which they had perhaps looked upon as already theirs, in which case one would only offend and not serve them, by forcing them to act otherwise than they wished; which would only embitter them instead of healing them. As he saw that I withstood this with all my might, and that I could not endure things to be done in this manner, he said that he knew them all, that he was well

assured they were reasonable and that there must infallibly be some misunderstanding which made them unreasonable on this occasion ; and it was accordingly to be hoped that, when we could see one another and have an explanation, they would spontaneously do justice to themselves and to me ; but that if, after we had met, they did not do so, it would be for me a proof of the wrong I should do them were I to oblige them to comply now by force, and that I should only irritate and embitter them. In conclusion he told me positively that I must accept this advice, which, of all that could be given, was the most conformable to charity and the example we owed them.

‘ I cannot in truth tell you, my dear Mother, whether this decision, which was taken so firmly as to leave me no further opening for resistance, gave me more confusion at the charity shown me or joy that my Profession was not to be deferred. For it seemed to me they so equally divided my spirit that I could not abandon myself to the one or to the other. I had, nevertheless, to make up my mind to that which was commanded me, and which so gratified my desire that I do not think I could have resolved to decline it. But, while accepting this shame so little anticipated, all I could do for consolation was earnestly to beg M. Singlin that, since they were good enough to receive me for nothing, it might be in the capacity of Lay Sister. This was the only means I could think of to afford some remedy to my ills ; and the thought had not left my mind from the moment when I saw myself reduced to the necessity of either deferring my Profession or being a charge upon the House. For, since the first alternative appeared to my desire impossible, I thought I could do no less than testify to the Sisters, by the humble service I should render them all my life, my gratitude for the double favour they would do me if, by receiving me gratuitously, their charity deigned to meet my impatience. As I knew myself to be so unworthy, I could not endure that my gratitude should not be well known ; and I thought it my duty to try and make up by what little work I could do for my other shortcomings.

‘ M. Singlin did not at first disapprove of my proposal, recognizing that nothing in the House could be more beneficial for me. But because God, Who searches hearts, knew I was not worthy of an estate which is so high in His eyes, and that my pride, past and present, deserved punishment and not reward, he took from the heart of M. Singlin the thought of acceding to my resolution. For, after weighing it, he judged that he ought not to comply, because he did not think I was strong enough for this position, so that I should need more

indulgence than my companions, and he feared lest this might weaken them, giving them occasion to think that it was done for other reasons and was a respect of persons, which is always hateful, for it offends against charity and the spirit of Religion, which admits of no distinction among the Sisters. Accordingly he determined to reject my prayer absolutely; so much so that I found myself reduced to let things be as our Mother had proposed.

‘I wrote at once to tell my relatives, by order of M. Singlin, and in the very manner he prescribed, for fear lest I should be carried away to exhibit too great heat. He approved, however, of my letting them see a little strongly their unfairness and the pain they had given me, because it might serve to aid them to do justice to themselves, by curing them of the opinion they clearly had that they were much injured, which made them think they were showing me favour enough by not expressing their anger more forcibly, and that nothing was incumbent upon them save to forgive me in their hearts. But he warned me at the same time to mingle many marks of gentleness and affection and even of tenderness, without showing any bitterness, since God gave me grace to feel none, so that, if the one might make them see their error, the other might serve to recall them. He commanded me above all to let them know the charity shown me of making me profess without admitting any delay, not even to see whether my affairs could not be arranged. But he advised me to point this out with such discretion that no indignation should appear, and that it might not seem to be the outcome of despite or passion, or a bravado one would make them, or perhaps an invention to touch their sense of honour, and he told me to express naively and nakedly the feelings of the House and my own—which were anything but all this; and to let them see merely that a small temporal gain was not esteemed worthy to defer a thing of such importance to a soul as is the total and solemn consecration which it desires to make of itself to God.

‘Since this letter, which could not be brief, occupied me until the evening, I was unable to see our Mother that same day. But on the morrow she assembled the Novitiate, as you know was her practice when she arrived from Port Royal (des Champs). I was there with the rest; and, saluting her in my turn, I could not help saying to her that I was the only sad one among all the Sisters, who were in great joy at her return. “What,” she said, “my daughter, is it possible that you are still sad? Were you not prepared for what you see? Have you not long known that one must never count upon the love of creatures, and that the world loves only what is its

own? Are you not very happy that God should take away all ground for doubting it before you have entirely quitted the world, so that you may perform this action with the greater courage, taking it as a species of necessity which renders you immovable in the resolution you have made, since you can say in a manner that you no longer have any one in the world?" I answered, weeping, that it seemed to me I was already so detached from it that I had no need of this experience. Whereupon she replied: "God desires to show you that you deceive yourself in this thought. For, if it were so, you would behold with indifference all that has happened, far from grieving as you do. This is why you ought to recognize that God is showing you a great grace, and should profit well by it." She said to me further much else upon the vanity of all human affection, holding me always in her embrace with much tenderness, until I had to leave her to make way for the others.

'The next day, the Mother Angélique observing during Prime the extraordinary sadness of my countenance, left the Choir before the beginning of Mass and, having me called, she made every effort to give some solace to my grief. But, since this space of time was too brief to satisfy her charity, directly after Mass she signed to me to follow her, and making me come beside her, she held me for a whole hour, my head upon her bosom, embracing me with the tenderness of a true mother; and there I may say with truth that she omitted nothing of all in her power to soothe my pain.

'Would to God, my dear Mother, that my mind and memory had been sufficiently under my control to have let nothing escape of this precious cordial she endeavoured to instil into my heart to sweeten its bitterness. I should esteem myself to have gained much by my affliction, and I venture to say I should make you a rare gift. But I had not the happiness or the capacity; and, in place of preserving all as were to be wished, I have been able only not to lose all. It is more especially in order to preserve the little which has remained with me, that I place it in your hands by this letter, as a relic which cannot fail to be very precious, even though it be but a tiny fragment of a great whole.

'Our Mother said to me first, with a severity full of gentleness: "I cannot be sufficiently surprised, my daughter, at seeing you weak like this for a thing of no consequence. You surprised me so much yesterday when you told me you were sad, that I cannot adequately express it to you. For I believed firmly that you had already forgotten all that had happened, since, things being left as they were, you had nothing more to do. I assure you I did not understand what you meant.

It took me a little time to guess and to call all this affair back to mind."

"The state I was in of depression was not so great but that I was struck by so ready a forgetfulness. For you will remember, my dear Mother, that this affair was so recent as to have been known and terminated only the previous day. Nevertheless she already no longer thought of it, which shows how genuine her indifference and with what sincerity she had wished me to renounce everything, regarding it as a matter thus concluded and of which there was no further need to think. But I, who was very far from so rare a virtue, could not answer save by tears. When she perceived it, she said to me, anticipating the excuse I might have made: "Why do you weep for that, or rather why do you not weep equally for all the sins of the world? If you consider only God in the matter, and the interest of your neighbour, why, when you saw certain of them fall into more considerable faults and into greater infidelity, much more important in respect of God, did you not weep as much as now when they have not, properly speaking, offended save against the love they owe you?"

"I replied, as I believed truly, that I was affected only by the injustice done to the House; and that, as for what concerned myself alone, I felt no movement of bitterness or of sorrow and that my heart seemed to me unconcerned on that score.

"You deceive yourself, my child," she said. "There is nothing more quickly touched or more easily affronted than affection. Your love for them was genuine and you see that theirs is not the same. For even though it may be true that they love you very much, they are still, do you see, of the world, and all the special grace God has shown them in giving them more knowledge of the things of God than many others does not hinder them from acting in the world as though of the world; that is to say, self-interest takes ever the lead. And it is that which has offended you, without your knowing it. It is true you have not done the same. But that too is because you were no longer of the world, even though you had not yet quitted it. And the proof that it is yourself whom you think of in the matter rather than the injustice sustained by the House, as you think, is that you are not touched in like measure by all that is done to it. I know, however, well that this is what chiefly moves you, but even as you yourself are concerned in it, for self-love mingles in everything."

"Thereupon she was good enough to relate to me in great detail several tales of the same kind, though without exposing the names; which she did, I think, as much to give me the

species of consolation found in companionship in distress, as to make me recognize that one never has the interests of justice so much at heart when one has no interest in the injustice committed as when one has some share in it. After having extracted from me this avowal, she added in the fullness of her heart what follows :—

“ This is one of the reasons which give me great joy that this has occurred, I say a keen and genuine joy ; and not for twice your property would I wish you not to have had this trial before your Profession. For you were not sufficiently tried during your Novitiate. See, my daughter, you renounced the world with great ease, because God has given you grace to recognize the vanity and the lack of substance in all the pleasures and amusements of the world, which charm and ravish other girls. You are not any the better on that account ; for it is God Who has shown you the grace, however unworthy of it you may be. It is certain that you were very detached from it ; but there remained to you still two things from which it was necessary to detach yourself and you did not think of them.

“ The one is, that, even though, from the world's point of view, you had not great riches, nevertheless, for Religion, one may say you had them in abundance, because one requires hardly anything in comparison with what one wants in the world. The other is, that the chief riches of your home were the friendship and very close union which rendered all things in common amongst you, and to which you trusted without thinking. God has elected to deprive you of the one and the other to make you really poor in all ways, and in love yet more than in riches. For you were prepared to give it up entirely, and you have made certain benefactions which can take the place in a manner of those which you proposed to make the House. For this reason you should be satisfied on that point ; and your deprivation is not the less great for the matter not going as you intended. But you did not think of parting with your affection and esteem for your relatives, because it seemed to you wholly innocent ; and in truth all that was in itself very permissible and very legitimate.

“ Nevertheless you see that God asks from you more detachment ; and to that end he has caused you to recognize what their feelings are for you : this is why I cannot tire of telling you that I rejoice greatly at what has happened. For their humour towards you would not have been other, only you would have known nothing of it, and you would always have flattered yourself with the thought that they were towards you as you towards them ; and, in fact, there was every reason

to think it. But, believe me, this is very rare. For those who give themselves to God do all things in the sight of God, with frank sincerity, without admixture of self-interest. But they who are still in the world cannot avoid having always some human views even in the most holy things, and, whereas the one set of persons treat secular matters in the spirit of God, the other treat the things of God in the spirit of the age. One must not be surprised at it. It is almost impossible to do otherwise when one lives in the world, unless it be by a quite special grace of God ; because all with whom one has intercourse do the same, and no one advises or judges matters save by the spirit of the world and human reason, so that things are not even looked at with reference to God.

“What I say to you may pass for simplicity. But judge for yourself if it be not true that everybody would call a person very foolish if he did not do his utmost to defend his claim to an inheritance and should let it be disposed of in favour of some one else. I tell you it is very rare to find any one not of this opinion, whatever their piety. For one is so prejudiced by self-interest that one considers that alone, and if there is some charity to be done one always prefers it should be done at one's own hands rather than at that of others, even though that be not customary. For, believe me, the persons of the world are not in the least disposed to show charity, because they do not know what need is. They never experience it,⁵ for they never want for anything. This is why, had I been here and you had spoken to me of all this before making the proposition to your relatives, I should have predicted to you point for point what you now see. For I have seen an endless variety of this sort.

“You see, my Sister, when a person is out of the world, all the favours shown him are thought of as thrown away. There were only two motives to induce them to agree to your purpose : either charity, making them share your feelings, or love, making them wish to oblige you. Now you were well aware that he who is principally concerned in this matter ” (viz. her brother) “is still too much in the world, and even engaged in vanity and amusement, to set the alms you wished to give above his private convenience ; and as for believing he would have enough affection to do it on your behalf, that was to hope an unheard-of and impossible thing. That could not occur without a miracle, I mean a miracle of nature and love, for there was no ground to await a miracle of grace in a person such as he, and you know well that one must never count upon miracles.”

‘I could not avoid interrupting our dear Mother to say to

her that, even had I made this reflection, I should none the less perhaps not have been turned aside from the trust I had in them, because I should have thought I had the right to hope for one of these miracles, since there were several instances in our family more remarkable than this one, and on the part of my late father in respect of one of my uncles, who for the rest was already sufficiently indebted to him.

“I can well believe that,” she said, “but your uncle was a man in society. Have you never heard a little tale from the *Lives of the Fathers in the Desert*, which bears closely on what you say, though it may not seem to at first sight. A man of the world went to see one of his brothers, who, after having lived very holily in the world, had retired into solitude, and was greatly surprised to find him eating at the hour of Nones, because before his retreat he never dined before Vespers. The hermit, perceiving it, said to him : ‘Do not be surprised, my brother, it is not an indulgence, but a necessity. When I was in the world I had no need of it, because my ears fed me. The praise given to my austerities so satisfied my mind that the body was fortified and emboldened even to redouble them, had there been need. But here, where nobody says a word to me, where self-love has nothing to please it, I am forced in spite of myself to give this satisfaction to nature, because it is in other respects absolutely destitute.’

“You see, my daughter,” she continued, “it is just the same in what you are speaking of. A gentleman (*un honnête-homme*) in society feels moved, even at the expense of his own interests, to do a kindness to a person who is in society like himself, because it is a constant witness and a trumpet to proclaim his action merely at the sight of him, and because the gratitude of this man and the praise he brings him are the recompense for his benefaction, so often as there are flatterers to congratulate him. But the services rendered to a person who is out of the world have nothing of all that. As it is an action purely of charity, which is more useful to him that gives than to him that receives, no one thinks of praising you for it. He who has received the benefit cannot proclaim it, because he is not there. Those who know and approve it, readily forget, because they have no interest in it, and it pays no one to remind them of it. Hence all done for Religious is held to be lost, because there is neither honour nor temporal gain to serve as recompense. You may take it as an infallible rule upon which one should never fail to build. Otherwise you will always be deceived. I have had so much experience that I can no longer doubt it. Indeed reason shows it ; for it is truly the world and its mode of behaviour.

It has always been like that and always will be ; and were it otherwise it would no longer be the world. Therefore consider you no longer have any friend in the world from the moment you leave it. There are no longer any from whom you should expect great signs of affection, unless from such as might show them by spirit of charity. But in that case it would not be you they would consider, and they would do as much for the veriest stranger."

' Thereupon she related several cases similar to mine, which she had herself known, and, among others, that the relatives of a girl of rank, whom she had allowed to profess, had broken their word, contrary to all expectation, as to the *dot*, which was to have been considerable, at a time when the Monastery was in great need of it; and that the girl was one who had always manifested a quite special love for her relatives. "I own," said our Mother, "that this injustice surprised and moved me very much, for I had held the thing assured from the manner they had always behaved with us. Nevertheless the late M. de Saint-Cyran advised me to suffer this hardship (for it really was one) with such gentleness and peace that he did not wish me even to mention it to them or to show them in any way that I was wounded, but that I should act just as if I had forgotten it. And he assured me that were I to do so, God would know well how to make good this loss and to provide by other means for our wants." Then she added: "God gave me grace to credit him and to follow his advice, for I have never thought it permissible to do anything he disapproved, and I have learnt since by constant experience the truth of this promise, as you see yourself.

"For this reason, my daughter, in God's name, do not reproach your relatives, or display any resentment, and do not let this affect your union. For, after all, what is it all about? a little property—that is all. Is it not less than nothing? It is true that property is necessary to life; one cannot do entirely without it. But in truth it seldom happens that one lacks enough to fall into genuine want, and it is covetousness to desire superfluity. When God sends it by legitimate ways, one may accept it, because it is necessary to have some in order to live. But when that is not so, or even when he permits us to be deprived of what we have, in truth one should rejoice. M. de Saint-Cyran said that riches are in the world like bad humours in the body, which fall always the more copiously upon the most feeble part and the most susceptible to ill. Thus it is a bad sign for any one when one sees that wealth comes to him in abundance from all sides. So that, instead of rejoicing when you see things are given us, you need

fear for this House nothing so much as to see it greatly enriched, and please to bear this well in mind. You are young, and some day you may see things happen similar to that which occurs now in your person and your affairs. That gives me great joy for all which has been done. For at least, if ever your advice is asked in a like event, you should have learned to do to others as has been done to you.

“Write then again to your relatives,” she added, “and above all to the person you wot of” (Mme Perier, the married sister) “who has most tenderness for you, and show them all possible affection with great open-heartedness, so that they may recognize its full sincerity, and simply, for fear of offending them by your renunciation of your property, and to show that you no longer think of it all; and when he who is presently expected” (her brother) “arrives, talk to him in the same manner, without making him the slightest reproach and not even showing any air of displeasure in respect of all which has occurred, to testify that you have forgotten it. As a fact you ought to have done so already, and for my part I am quite amazed to find you so weak in a matter of such slight importance.”

Thereupon she was silent for a time, and I had the opportunity of telling her that one of the things which distressed me most in the matter was my fear that I had employed my property ill when it was under my control, because I had made a personal gift of a large part, whereas I might have distributed it with more charity. True I thought at the time I had sufficient for that and for the other things I proposed to do. Nevertheless I greatly feared I had been culpable at any rate of precipitancy.¹

She thought a little, then she said to me: “Do not be uneasy; for I do not think that, even were things again under your control, you could in conscience abstain from doing what you did under the circumstances. You know well that you looked only to God in the matter, and to the welfare of that person who must be dearer to you than all the gold of the world, and that it was not from ambition to make him great or give him *éclat* in the world. Neither did it provide him the means, since you see that, with all you have given him, he has not the wherewithal to live like others of his estate. What then makes you fear you disposed of it badly? What less could you have done? But I will say more. Even were it true that what you have given him served only to maintain him at present in vanity, I believe you would none the less

¹ She had made over a portion of her inheritance by deed of gift to her brother.

have been bound to God to act as you did, since, had you done less, you would have offended him and done him great harm (I mean to his conscience), in employing the money otherwise ; and that you may not think I speak without basis, I must tell you for your consolation a thing which will surprise you.

“The late M. de Saint-Cyran, who belonged to God as you know, had a brother who was in the world as much as it is possible to be, and who even died in it. You may think how that grieved him. Nevertheless, although he knew him such as he was, he did not refrain from giving him a considerable property which he owned, and which he wished to dispose of in order to possess as little earthly riches as he could. You do not question but that he had opportunities of employing his property better, that is to say he could have done much charity ; however he did not. He gave this property to his brother, who would make use of it only for vanity, and this from another ground of charity of no less account than the first. For he did it in order to preserve the affection of this person, and not to alienate him, as would infallibly have been the case had he not given it, because he would have testified the low opinion he held of his manner of life . . . , and thus he would have lost all remaining hope of being able to serve him in the way he desired. For, as he knew what price to set upon things, he had no scruple in squandering, and even losing, a little temporal possession to obtain for him true possessions. This shows you, my daughter, that you have not done ill in acting similarly, since you did it with a like end.

“But in order to relieve you of all scruple, you must know” (she added in an admirable movement of charity) “that, were it true you had committed a fault and a waste, which, as I say, is not the case, and that your property had been simply thrown away, you should look upon it as one of the least of possible losses ; I say truly one of the least. For think, my Sister : all things outward and perishable are nothing. The waste one makes of the smallest grace of God is a thousandfold greater in His eyes than that of all the goods of the earth. Whatever usage we may make of these, God thinks little of all that. What does He care for our possessions ? He esteems them as nothing in comparison of the virtues He sets within us. These are the true riches ; and one must often examine oneself as to the use one makes of them, for one’s personal benefit and for that of others. Nevertheless one does not think about that.

“One is very little moved, or not at all, at falling short of one’s usual humility, or of gentleness, or of some other

virtue. Yet one has scruples at employing ill a little money, which is the least of all the goods whereof God will ask account, because at the very most it could have served only to relieve some temporal ill or for some other work which time bears away ; whereas the grace of God and the virtues He gives us are treasures which should do service eternally to our own soul and to that of others, if we take heed to guard them well and not let them be lost. To conclude, the matter is settled ; you need no longer think about it. I tell you it is a temptation for you, which distracts you from what you have to do. Do not think any more about it all ; think only of rendering thanks to God because, after having had compassion to give you the idea of quitting the world, He gives you acquaintance of this House and the esteem you have conceived for it, which has made you give it preference over any other. For, but for that, you would doubtless have been at the Carmelites, now so greatly in vogue and with such high repute of sanctity,—and justly so. For it is true that they are Nuns as holy as one could wish, whose austerities are prodigious, and their observance of all their rules so exact that they would not fall short one *iota*. But, in respect of money, there is no quarter granted ; and you may feel sure that, in the actual state of your affairs, they would have made you quarrel with all your relatives and break off from everybody, rather than abate a jot of what they had ground to hope from you.

“This is a thing which should fill us with compassion and at the same time cover us with confusion. For they are such holy persons and souls so faithful to the good they know, that it is evident they act thus only by lack of such teaching as should make them know that it is an evil and a very great one. And one has reason to believe, indeed it is beyond doubt, that, if they had the light with which God has favoured us, they would be incomparably more faithful to it. This is why we must the more wonder at the mercy of God which is so rare, and which He has shown us although we so little deserved it. That ought to give so much joy as to make you forget all else. For, were you there, you would think you could do no better than follow the commands of your Superiors, as you are doing here. What, however, would be the outcome ? Are you not then very fortunate to have fallen into the hands of persons who conduct you according to the pure rules of charity, as though they had no interest in the matter ? ”

‘I could not abstain from begging her to consider that that in itself was a most legitimate ground of sorrow, because the injustice done was the more blameable, the more disinterested was the House.

“That,” she said, “is a sentiment which clearly shows you are not yet quite one of the House; that is to say, you have not lost the habit of looking upon yourself as belonging to your family rather than to us, since you are jealous for their honour and their gain at the expense of ours.”

“Then, speaking seriously again: “See, my daughter,” she said, “it is certain that the charity you owe your relatives compels you to desire greatly they should yield to reason. But you must wish it in respect of everything, not only in what concerns us. Otherwise it would be not charity but veritable covetousness. On the contrary, if they must show injustice to any one, desire rather heartily that it may be to us rather than to others. For you do not know how others would take it; and you are assured that we shall not trouble ourselves. And, besides, it is certain that, although, by the grace of God, we are not rich, neither are we in sufficient need to be unable to do without the money.”

“You see that we lack nothing. We have no genuine want (which ought to give us real confusion before God, we who make profession of poverty); but, apart from all that, it is to our advantage to be ill-treated in all things, to be despised, to be calumniated, to have injustice done us. Not that we should wish this to happen, or should obtain it were it in our power, because it would be lacking charity to those who should commit it, since on their side would be sin. But as for us, it is a very great good fortune; so that, when God permits it to happen without our concurrence, we should greatly rejoice; I say with true joy. It is our greatest gain, and we should believe it to be so and act accordingly. Otherwise we should be wanting in fidelity to the light God gives us, and we should have neither poverty nor disinterestedness. For in what would it consist, if we did not let it appear when occasion offered? It would be then nothing but talk and parade, to gain the world’s esteem.”

“She said these words so forcibly that it seemed as though she doubted in a manner my power of putting them strictly into practice, and that she wished to imprint them on my heart. But, as though she had read my thought, she answered it at once, softening a little; and said to me, smiling: “I do not in the least doubt but you share my feelings, and I am very certain that, were your advice asked in a like matter affecting indifferent persons, you would be very sorry for them to act otherwise than as now. I am sure even that you would feel neither anger nor grief, and that you would not make the persons in question the smallest reproach or show them coldness; I would stake my hand in the fire this is so. But what

I have said should make you recognize that you have still much self-love, and that, whatever you may believe, it is not really either the House or Justice you are chiefly thinking of in all that has occurred, but yourself and your distress at being unable to arrange things as you wished.

“Supposing robbers had entered here last night and carried off whatever money we have, would you weep over it, and be distressed as at present? Assuredly not. For even though one may be annoyed at such things, and would prevent them if one could, one is not really afflicted about them. To be so, one would have to care very much for riches. All the same it would be an injustice and wrong done to the House. You see then very clearly that one must not flatter oneself, and that it is for oneself and for one's own private interest that one grieves.

“Forget then all that has passed, and behave to your relatives in the manner I have said. I beg you, speak to them, and write to them, as though nothing had happened, only that you will confirm the renunciation you have made. But remember that you must write and speak with sincerity. For, on the one hand, you must avoid doing it in pride and bravery, saying: *We are more generous than you*. Done from this motive, it is worth nothing at all. There must be nothing save charity alone compelling, else it is as though we were to do nothing. On the other hand, one must beware also of trying to touch their affection in order to compel them to do what you wish. For that would be taking again with one hand what you give up with the other. But you must act by the sole desire of setting all at peace, and especially your sister, whom you know to be very tender and who would be deeply moved if she thought you were angry with her. That might dangerously affect her present indisposition.” (Madame Perier was *enceinte* at the moment.)

‘I report to you all these small particulars, my dear Mother, perhaps with more freedom than reason, and even contrary to courtesy, which requires one not to importune others with what concerns oneself alone, and least of all persons to whom one owes much respect. But I have deemed this maxim inapplicable here, because it seems to me that every one must be as much touched as I, on seeing the care and charity of our dear Mother, and at noting how, when this divine virtue is so strongly rooted in a soul as in hers, it governs all. It operates indeed everything there, calls forth even the slightest impulses and thoughts, and gives proof on all occasion of the happy sway it exercises,—and that in actions the most natural and least weighed, because it serves as a second nature, having

become mistress of the first. You know that this was clearly apparent in our Mothers' rule, but I may say with truth that I never observed it better than at this juncture. I do not know if it is because I only this once saw them engaged in affairs, or because one is always more touched by what concerns oneself.

'I think, my dear Mother, that I have the happiness to be well enough known to you, for you to conceive what joy I felt in the midst of all my sorrow at finding my opinion of the disinterestedness of the House, and of the purity of its Conduct, so surely confirmed. Nevertheless my pride was so great (for I no longer dare call it love of justice), that I could not absolutely resolve to leave the matter as our Mother wished ; so that I implored her to consider that, if I deferred my Profession for four years, I might hope to be mistress of my affairs, and even to add to my capital the savings of a considerable allowance which my relatives were bound to make me in return for a certain favour I had conferred on them, and which the harshness they had shown me well entitled me to claim for the future, instead of acquitting them as I had hitherto done. I told her again that this being so, however great my wish to profess soon (and it exceeded in truth all expression I can give it), I held myself nevertheless bound in conscience and irrespective of all self-interest, to make this delay, in order to have it in my power to do justice to the House.

"No," she said, " my daughter ; on the contrary, you are bound not to do it. For do you not see that, even if you had full power to execute your purpose, it is nevertheless not in your power to make them accede to it ? I have never questioned what you say ; I know well that, strictly, no one can prevent you from doing what you like with your property. But I am not concerned with what you *can* do, I consider only what you ought to do : that is the whole question. And I do not doubt at all but that you are bound, I say indispensably, to procure their peace of mind so far as you can, and to do nothing which may offend them. When you thought everything was at your disposal, without anticipating any difficulty, you desired nevertheless to have their consent to what you wished, and you were right. Otherwise you would have given them ground of offence ; and, in effect, that was why you did it. Judge then how offended they would be were you to do it in spite of them and by a species of violence. If anything is done, it must be they themselves who do it of their own impulse, without your taking any part."

'Being unable to answer the arguments of our dear Mother, or to resist her will, I begged her to permit me at least to threaten them with this, in order to see what effect it would

produce. But she would consent no more to this than to the rest. "No," she said, "my daughter, take good heed not to. Do you not see well that you would thereby destroy all you desire to do in your renunciation? Credit me; leave matters as they are and remember that you are bound above all things to prefer their repose of spirit, and the peace which should be among you, above every other interest, that it may not pass here as in the places we were speaking of. And this ought to be so precious to you that, had you two millions of wealth, I would counsel you to give it them without hesitation, to prevent charity cooling between you. Speak of it then no more, nor think of it. When you see them, say nothing about it at all. Should they speak of it, you will tell them that you know perfectly you had left everything in their hands, and that, since you had no longer any concern in the matter, you no longer thought about it." Thereupon our dear Mother dismissed me without permitting further reply, and the interview ended in this manner.

'A few days later, that one of my relatives' (her brother Blaise Pascal) 'who had chief interest in this affair, came to this city, and I endeavoured to deal with him as our Mother proposed. But, whatever effort I might make, it was impossible for me to hide entirely the sadness I still felt, in spite of all the trouble she had taken to dispel it. This was so little customary with me that he at once perceived it; and he had no need of an interpreter to learn the cause. For although I put on as friendly an air as I could, I know that he readily understood it was his action which had put me in this state. He wished, however, to be first to complain; and then it was I learnt that they regarded themselves as so injured by what I had written. But he left off speaking when he saw that I made no complaint on my side, although I could else have upset all his arguments with a single word. On the contrary, I declared to him, as cheerfully as my actual state permitted, that, since the House was willing to show me the charity of receiving me for nothing, and since my Profession was not deferred, I troubled myself no longer about anything save making it well, and drawing down the grace I had need of to be a true Religious.

'Had the whole of this colloquy been as worthy of record as the above, I should have taken pains to retain it, and should in no wise grudge the time spent in transcribing it. But because it is not entirely either so beautiful or so useful, as I am sure you will readily believe without its being necessary for me to assert it further, it is better to pass it over in silence than to waste time in wearying you. I will say in one word

that he was touched to confusion, and that he resolved of his own impulse to set this matter in order, even proposing to take upon himself all the charges and risks upon the property, and to do for the House in his name that which he saw could not with justice be omitted.

‘I will give you, my dear Mother, the conclusion of this tale, although my actual purpose is not to acquaint you with it,—it is not worth it; but only to preserve the memory of my obligations to our Mothers, and of the profitable teaching I received on this occasion. This is what obliges me to give it all, because the one and the other persisted to the end.

‘When the person of whom I have just spoken had left me, I went to give an account of this interview to our Mothers, to learn from them if I ought to dictate to him, as he seemed to expect, what he ought to do for the House. But they forbade me absolutely to claim anything, expressly commanding me to be satisfied with what he proposed to give without prescribing him anything, and to do nothing save fall in with his intentions. However, on learning the character of his property, they approved my proposing to him to take whatever he thought of giving out of a certain portion; which was for his own convenience. That was the utmost for which I could obtain leave, and the matter was thus concluded. For there was no need to urge him to do more than he might wish, since I had express orders to take his first inclination for law, and so expressly, and by such absolute authority, that I dared take part in this affair no more than if it had not concerned me, unless sometimes through impetuosity and on first impulse. But I had always many qualms on that score, because the commands I received were based on so many grounds drawn from the principles of supreme reason, that, even though I could not yield to them, I was constrained to acknowledge I could not answer them, and to recognize when I broke them that I acted contrary no less to my own conscience than to obedience.

‘This matter could not, however, be entirely terminated until after three or four interviews, which were marvellously beneficial to me. For, when I went to render count of them to our Mothers, I had occasion to recognize their constant care so to act that all might be according to God and the rules of the most perfect charity. I cannot sufficiently tell you, my dear Mother, how fully this appeared on every opportunity. I pray God not to permit me ever to forget it. For I can say with truth that I have learnt more from their mode of proceeding than from many of the best sermons I have heard on this theme.

‘But what was admirable, was to see the diversity of Conduct which the Holy Spirit inspired, Who animated them all. For our Mother (Angélique), justly guarding the interest of the House, made it apparent that her chief concern was to prevent any shade of self-interest, of avarice, or of weakness, entering into all this business, and, in fine, she was bent only on submitting to every sort of injustice rather than do the smallest thing contrary, however slightly, to the true spirit of Religion. M. Singlin, as common Father both of the House and my relatives (some of whom are wholly under his Conduct, while the others know him intimately and have extreme affection for him), was animated with the zeal of our Mother in respect of the House, but in such a manner as to be also touched with compassion for them, and he was no less distressed at the injustice of their action than rejoiced at the profit he held it might bring to the Monastery. The Mother Agnès seemed to put off upon those two these two concerns, and to occupy herself mainly with teaching her Novice to profit by what was taking place. For, every time I saw her, she carefully weighed what I reported, to make me observe all that was human in my behaviour, or that betrayed the spirit of the world; and, with an unwearying charity, she did not cease to make every effort to forestall by her warnings the faults into which I might fall; to raise me again when her precautions had proved vain, and to see that I lost none of the opportunities proffered of exercising either patience, or tolerance, or humility, or some other of those virtues far from pleasing to the imperfect.

‘Not but that our Mother had the same care. But as she was in a manner charged with the general Conduct of the House rather than with that of my particular person, she did not inquire so often into what concerned me alone, and her first care, whenever the sight of me called to her mind what was occurring, was to forbid me absolutely to make any effort to bring things about as I desired. And never did she fail, every time she spoke to me, to beg me to be resolute in exacting nothing from my relatives, exhorting me to take part in the interests of the House in this manner. When she saw once, by the account I gave her, that I had spoken a little warmly of how little this person proposed to do, she reproved me severely, and said to me, in the forcible manner which gives such weight to the burning words so often issuing from her mouth, that it could be nothing but pride or avarice making me speak thus, or perhaps both combined, desiring at once to increase the wealth of this House and to have the honour of having greatly contributed to it. She so strongly represented to me the feelings with which the spirit of poverty

should inspire me at this juncture that one had needs have been hardened completely not to conceive a scruple at acting otherwise. In the end, everything was settled on the eve of my Profession, the day for which had long been fixed without any regard to the progress of the affair, and, since all that remained was for the one and the other to sign, I begged our Mother to repair to the Parlour for that purpose. But she could not, being very unwell that day ; which was noteworthy, because she was delighted : " So that," she said, " it may all be put off until after your Profession, and that your relative may do nothing save in perfect freedom and from pure spirit of charity. For see, my daughter, one must be resolute in one's principles. We know that all which is not done by the spirit of God, and from charity, is done from cupidity, and that all which is done from cupidity is sin. That is why I have so exhorted you not to prick either his sense of honour or his affection. For I should much prefer he should give nothing at all than that he should give much from a motive purely human. If he does it of himself, we cannot help it. All we can do, you and I, is to exhort him not to. For we are not the rulers of his conscience to see from what motive he acts, it is for him to examine it ; but to contribute by our talk, or by our demeanour, or in whatsoever manner, to give him a bad motive, would be not only to participate in his sin but to be its cause.

" Therefore, my daughter, in God's name, take good heed not to incite him to do what you would not do yourself. For, if it were you to decide, you would not make a gift to the House for human considerations. Why then should you try to make him do it ? If he is not disposed to do it from a good motive, it is much better he should not do it at all. Perhaps at some other time God will touch him. But if that should not be, you must not be troubled ; it is to the good of the House. Go, then, and tell him yet once more now, and cordially, that he should search his heart to see what induces him to make this benefaction, that he must do nothing precipitately and that there will always be time enough after your Profession, since I am not in a state to be able to do what is necessary for accepting it. Besides you know that here a Sister's *dot* is never spoken of until after her Profession."

' I acquitted myself as faithfully as I could of this commission, and I recited to him this brief discourse, word for word, as to you. It surprised him not a little, although he had long been acquainted with the manner in which things are conducted here. But he had with him certain lawyers, who were so amazed that they said never had they known such

a manner of proceeding, and that this was not the customary behaviour. They said a great deal more; but that is not to the point of our discourse. He' (her brother) 'did not wish, however, to put it off any longer; and to testify on his side that he did willingly what little was in his power, and to convince me of what he repeatedly protested—that he greatly regretted not being able to do more—, he did not fail to return the following day.

'At the close of the interview he then had with our Mother, who was better that day and could not make an excuse, he told me that she first said she did not know whether I had dealt with him in the manner I had been constantly urged. "For this reason, Monsieur," she said to him, "for fear lest she may have failed to do so, I am bound to tell you that I adjure you in the name of God to do nothing out of human consideration, and, unless you do this charity in the spirit of charity, not to do it at all. See, Monsieur: we have learnt from the late Monsieur de Saint-Cyran to accept nothing for the House of God which does not come from God. All that is done from any other motive than charity is not a fruit of the spirit of God, and consequently we ought not to accept it." He replied with protestations all that courtesy required on such occasions, without wishing in the least to defer; and the matter was thus concluded.

'Our Mother, meeting me afterwards, told me I need no longer torment myself about anything, and that all was concluded. Then, drawing me aside, she said to me very gravely that she was very troubled at having seen me so anxious to make the said person behave liberally, and so distressed when I thought he would not do so. "I am genuinely afraid, my daughter," she said with wonderful kindness, "lest you have offended God by it. I beg you to think it over seriously; and reflect besides that you have in fact no ground of complaint against your relative. For it is certain that he gives liberally in proportion to what he has, especially if one compares him with almost every one else. I wish you knew how most people abuse the disinterestedness shown them; it is not credible. But we must not on that account abstain from doing our duty. It is said that secular persons are so avaricious and unfair that one must not be surprised if Religious are the same, and that they set the example. But, you see, my daughter, we do not wish to imitate them in their other vices, why should we imitate them in this? They love amusement, play, and fine clothes; they avenge themselves when offended, and many other such things: should we do the same? Why, then, is it proposed we should imitate

them in their avarice? Is it not a sin as great as the rest? But the fact is, when one is avaricious, one is very glad to excuse oneself on the score that every one is the same. One must not thus deceive oneself. One must recognize evil as it is and where it is."

'These, my dear Mother, are the last words said to me on the matter and the conclusion of the whole affair. . . .'

Sister Jacqueline de Sainte Euphémie concludes for herself with apologies for bad writing, &c., due to the little leisure which her 'obedience' left her for this narrative. And in a postscript she inserts a final apology for the gilded paper on which she had written—surviving token of her love, in unregenerate girlhood, of writing poetry:—

'I found it in a box which had been left me, and, as this was the last thing that remained to me of the world, at least of outward things, I thought well to make it a sacrifice to God. It seemed to me that gold could not be better employed than in making known charity, of which it is the image. Even thus I can render only the shadow in exchange for the reality of that shown to me, which deserves rather, in my opinion, characters of blood than gilded paper, to preserve its memory.'

CHAPTER XXIII

The Five Propositions.—The Formula.—Censure of Arnould.

THE tumult brought by the Fronde presently subsided. The nuns received from other convents were free to depart, they of Port Royal to return to Les Champs where, at the expense of a recent convert, the Duc de Luines, a new dormitory had been built for them and the church raised and improved. But general disturbance cleared away only to give place to private alarms. The 'persecution' of Port Royal now waxed stronger, and the goodwill and better knowledge which hospitality had won for the nuns availed them little against the odium constantly and at length successfully cast upon them by the Jesuits.

The prosperity of the convent and the growth above all of the *Petites Écoles* kept by *ces Messieurs*, served only to quicken the enmity of the Jesuits. They were now declared and implacable foes, and each several stroke that failed only stirred them to renewed effort. Attacks against the schools were for a time checked by the 'hand of Providence', somewhat cruelly displayed; Mazarin's nephew, a child at school in the Jesuit College of Clermont, was killed by a fall in the rough game of 'tossing the blanket', and the Jesuits found it wisest to drop the question of schools. The sermons of M. Singlin were jealously watched. One preached on the Day of S. Augustine, in the very midst of the civil disturbances (1649), had seemed dubious enough to procure his suspension; as, previously, a stop had been put to the Lenten preaching of a like uncompromising Christianity by the Père des Mares, at the church of S. Merri. But at S. Merri, the curé, Du Hamel, had pursued the same stern vein,¹ and M. Singlin was soon reinstated by the Archbishop and his sermons more largely attended than before. Direct attack upon the nuns

¹ v. *Lettres de la Mère Angélique*, vol. i, pp. 361, 363-A.

was no more successful. The Mother Angélique obtained now (1651) from the Archbishop easy redress for a calumnious work, *Le Jansénisme Confondu*, written by the same Jesuit Father who had failed at Rome in the matter of the *Fréquente Communion*, and sold, as the title-page announced, in the Cloître des Jésuites. This work exceeded all bounds in its insulting reflections upon these 'heretic' and 'anti-sacramentarian' Nuns of Port Royal; and the Archbishop published an open censure of so gross a libel upon nuns directly under his jurisdiction, and by him approved. A second outrageous calumny, *Le Port Royal d'intelligence avec Genève*, was parried by the indefatigable pen of Antoine Arnauld, already volumes deep in controversy.

But however open attack might be parried, or the convent win esteem, in spite of prejudice, from other communities, there was no dispersing the cloud of private calumny. The friendship of the Cardinal de Retz, hero of the Fronde,—coadjutor and presently successor to his uncle Gondi, the Archbishop—, occasioned the rumour that the hermits were implicated in the civil disturbances. De Retz bore amused witness to the ineptitude of such people for conspiracy, as Anne of Austria on another occasion smiled at the notion of the candid and loyal d'Andilly stirring up sedition. Other reports were yet more ridiculous. The nuns were sun-worshippers—it would seem because they had built their Chapel towards the east, a practice fallen into disuse.¹ As for Antoine Arnauld, theologian and particular foe, such unlikely slanders as an understanding with Cromwell, or,—but this was later,—his support of the disgraced minister, Fouquet, were circulated. By a consoling parallel, Arnauld recalled how the early Christians were accused of causing bad harvests and of being the authors of every evil which befell the State. Yet insensibly, however consoled and through all demonstration of absurdity, Port Royal was blackened in public esteem and the way prepared for more adroit assault. True, that very fact of calumny brought friends more closely round the Convent in generous partisanship, but it was to share in the discredit.

¹ *Lettres de la Mère Angélique*, vol. i, p. 364.

Already the triumphant weapon of the Jesuits was forged.

Jansen's life-work, the *Augustinus*, had appeared in 1638 and, in the background of the stir caused by the *Fréquente Communion*, had been the occasion of intermittent theological sparring. The Jesuits had not been able to suppress the work, but up to this time the interest of the formidable Latin tome had been confined to theologians.

In 1649,—the year of the first Fronde, the same year that M. Singlin was temporarily suspended from preaching—, the ex-Jesuit Cornet, a member of the Sorbonne, had the happy thought of extracting from the *Augustinus* a number of Propositions, representing, or purporting to represent, its doctrine, and offered them for censure to the Sorbonne and to Rome. With these Propositions, reduced eventually to five, the Jesuits skilfully drew the combat from off the moral to the doctrinal ground, and, accentuating the Calvinistic aspect of the doctrine of grace, caught the disciples of Jansen and Saint-Cyran on their vulnerable side.

The Five Propositions set forth the doctrine of grace in its extreme statement and unquestionably awkward logical consequences, where it clashes not only with natural reason but also with faith in God's goodness. The first, the only one verbally drawn from Jansen, is to the effect: 'That a good man is at times unable, whatever effort he make, to perform certain of God's commands, because the requisite grace is not given.' The second, third, and fourth are to the effect that man has no free-will, or power to resist inward grace once given; the fifth, which from comparative simplicity of expression caught the popular mind, 'that Christ did not die for all men.'

These subtleties and the distinctions drawn between adequate grace and effective grace (*grâce suffisante et grâce efficace*) need not detain us. Neither need we trace the preliminary steps in the controversy: how the Bishops in France took part for or against, one group calling on Rome to examine the matter, another warning the Pope of personal animosity and hidden design, and of danger, in the person of Jansen, to S. Augustine himself: how delegates in favour of Jansen went to Rome,—the journal of one of them, Saint-Amour by name, forms a thick closely-printed folio.

The Jansenists were in a quandary, between their dread of Calvin and love of S. Augustine, from whom Calvin also had drawn. But so too was the Pope who, gladly suppressing the doctrine, was not prepared to impeach the great Father of the Church. The 'Jansenists', or 'Augustinians' as they preferred to be called, drew up a three-column edition of the disputed questions, with the views of the Molinists on the one hand, of the Calvinists on the other, and in the centre the true doctrine as they held it. These debates occupied two years; then, in 1653, the Pope, Innocent X, took his stand and issued a Bull declaring the Five Propositions heretical, though at the same time assuring the delegates of his unbroken allegiance to S. Augustine and the doctrine of effective grace.

The news reached Port Royal of the condemnation, at first without the qualifying assurance.

'On July the 2nd, 1653, day of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin, M. Arnauld, the Mère Angélique's brother, received news of the censure passed at Rome upon the Five Propositions (attributed to M. Jansenius) and he came at once to tell the Mother. She was not surprised but, lifting up her eyes to Heaven, she said to him: "You see, my brother, God desired to humiliate us. If our friends who went to Rome in order to defend the effective grace of the Son of God, and the doctrine of S. Augustine, had hindered the Molinists from hurting it by a Bull, it would have been very difficult for us not to be exalted, and not to attribute to the force of writings, and the capacity and high-mindedness of individuals, that glory which is never due save to God's Providence and to the power of truth itself. He shows us now that we are useless servants, that it is for Him alone to defend His cause, and that, unless He employ His same invisible grace in the hearts of some, and His visible protection upon the persons of certain others, it will go hard but His truth shall suffer some injury, and the doctrine of S. Augustine, which has hitherto been received as that of the Church, will lose credit little by little in the spirit of the Court, and in that of many other persons."

M. Arnauld replied to this with sundry remarks.

'The Mother meanwhile remained in profound silence and appeared absorbed in God. Then she took up the speech and said to him: "I must tell you a thought which comes into my mind; it is, that it seems to me our Age was not

worthy to see a miracle so great as it would have been, had five individuals sent to Rome (who, though pious and zealous for the truth, are not Saints to work miracles) been able of themselves alone to resist all the intrigues and cabals of the Molinists . . . and all the corruption of the Court of Rome. One must not, however, lose courage. The pride of the enemy will rise to insolence. They were not yet proud enough, nor we sufficiently humble. God has ways enough to put them down. Nevertheless we must hold ourselves ready to suffer and meet things at their worst. Humble suffering is one of the strongest means of defending the truth, because the truth is holy, and Christian patience is holy.”¹

M. le Maître, who records this speech at second-hand, presumably from his uncle Arnould, was sent for to learn the news. And, when he had learnt it, he was much surprised, and said to her :—

“ You were in the right, my Mother, when you told me a week ago that the audience which had been granted to M. l'Abbé de Valcroissant (de Lalane) and to the Père des Mares” (two of the five delegates) “might very well be a snare, with intention to take them in, and to be able to say they had not been condemned before being heard, although perhaps the condemnation was already made beforehand, *deridetur justi simplicitas*.” “It is true,” she said, “but we must not abandon our simplicity for their cunning. The grace of the Son of God has always been attacked by hypocrites and cheats, and defended by the simple and sincere. Let us pray, let us weep and groan. Tears will effect more than pens and writings. For writings are not understood by men, and tears will be by God.”

Looking to these humble weapons, the spirit of the Mother was high to meet whatever might befall Port Royal and herself. M. le Maître called to her mind prophecies made to them, more than once, of persecution. He said to her that, if he remembered rightly, it had even been declared blood would be shed.

‘A Sister who was present cried out “Blood shed, my Mother ! What ! they will kill our Fathers ? that will be very grievous.” The Mother began to laugh, and said to her : “But, my Sister, I do not know why you think that so sad,

¹ *Entretiens . . . avec M. le Maître, Mémoires pour servir . . .*, vol. ii, p. 362 seq.

for one must always die, and, for my part, I would rather die kneeling, and instantaneously by a stroke from a sword cutting off my head, than languish a long time in the death-agony in my bed without knowing what one is doing; the other manner of death is much pleasanter.”¹

M. le Maître hoped that whatever blood were shed might save the Church, even as the blood of S. Thomas Archbishop of Canterbury had preserved it. But he added to the Mother Angélique that there was little to fear for her, and that at the worst she could but be relegated to some distant convent; to which she replied:—

“Let them do what they will, I am already prepared; I have always begged God to let me retire at the close of my life into a cell: here will be a genuine opportunity. I will take with me spectacles and a lancet; the one for reading, the other to succour the sick who need bleeding. The one will be for truth, the other for charity. For the rest, I will keep profound silence, and the Court will be very much deceived if they imagine I shall dogmatize: for I shall speak only to God, and enjoy perfect repose.”

“The following day . . . she said to us,” her nephew continues, “I have a quite personal reason to rejoice at this matter, namely, that, if persecution arise against our Monastery, I am certain to have the chief part. For I do not hope that God will do good to me in the other world unless He do me evil in this.”

But further reflection convinced her the immediate danger was slight.

‘On Sunday, the 6th day of the same month, when our foundation is celebrated, she said to us’ (Antoine Arnauld, MM. le Maître and de Saci): “The more I consider this matter before God, the more I hope in His mercy; the Jesuits and the Court may do what they will, the truth will not perish.” . . . Alluding to the Pelagian monks who, in the days of the early Church, had burned a Convent and slain and mutilated nuns faithful to “grace”, she observed, “For my part I shall be readily consoled when I see them burn our new dormitory, which is but just finished; for, look you, all that is not sin afflicts me very little.”

‘Seeing that she expressed no apprehension of immediate

¹ *Entretiens . . . avec M. le Maître*, loc. cit., pp. 366-7.

persecution, in consequence of this Bull, M. le Maître said to her : " But, my Mother, who can check people who, ever since 1643 and 1644, when it was only a question of the book *De la Fréquente Communion*, approved by so many Doctors and Prelates, sued at the Court for three months to have Monsieur Arnauld put in the Bastille, as the Cardinal Mazarin since openly said, protesting that this act of violence had seemed to him shameful and that he had prevented it ; and who have recently asked, in writings printed and addressed to the Queen, that she should put him, with all his abettors, to death upon the scaffold ;—what may they not ask on this occasion, now they have the pretext of a Bull ? " " They will ask everything," she said, " and it is certain that men could not check them ; but God can do it. And it sometimes happens that, when persons are exalted to the extreme point of insolence, God opens at their feet a precipice into which He makes them fall ; and that, when His servants believe themselves overwhelmed and lost, they are saved. The Jesuits will make the Queen believe that they have obtained from the Pope all they wished, although that is quite false ; for the censure does not fall upon the particular and Catholic meaning, in which alone the Doctors sent to Rome declared they maintained the Propositions to be according to S. Augustine and the Church. But the truth will, little by little, dispel these clouds with which they seek to obscure it. One must leave God to act. He never works greater acts of grace than when extremity is greatest. And when may we better hope it than for the sake of the truth of His very grace, which is so far from doing us violence in its efficacy and preventing us from being free (as nowadays they would have us believe), that we never do anything with less constraint, with more freedom, more joy, with more pleasure and more fullness of volition, than what we do by movement of the Holy Spirit, which, in ravishing our heart, shows us but a gentle violence." "

Towards the end of the same month of July, the further news reached Port Royal, and seemed to justify Angélique's confidence, that the Pope, while condemning the Propositions, had declared it in no way his intention to reflect upon the doctrine of S. Augustine, and of grace effective in itself and necessary to all good works.

M. le Maître read the letter containing the news to Angélique.

'She praised God and said—"He had treated us as His children, humbling us first and raising us afterwards, and the

Molinists as His adversaries, letting them first be exalted to humiliate them afterwards." And a Sister who was present, added, that we had been at first terrified and afterwards comforted, as in the Visions of good Angels: and that they on the contrary had been caressed and made glad at first, as in the Visions of Evil Spirits, and then terrified and distressed.

The Mother said afterwards: "Let us amend our lives, let us amend our lives. That is the true way to make the truth victorious over its enemies." ¹

The Pope's saving clause left Arnould, M. Singlin, and all the Community, free to bow in silence to his decision. The condemnation of the Five Propositions, being no condemnation of S. Augustine, was, in their eyes, no condemnation of S. Augustine's true interpreter, Jansen.

Their submission left that year in peace. Angélique passed the winter quietly at Port Royal des Champs, and saw to the completion of the cells in the new dormitory which the Duc de Luines had built. She had the happiness, the following spring, of seeing the young Abbess of Gif, who had come under her influence when sheltering from danger during the Fronde, resign her Abbey, obtained by worldly favour, and set in her place a duly elected nun,—she herself then entering humbly as novice at Port Royal in Paris.² Through all outward change of event, Angélique's influence remained the same, directed constantly towards those aims she had so ardently embraced in youth.

But the calm even of that year was full of menace. The advantage gained by the Jesuits was a real one, and they were not slow in pressing it home. In their writings, in caricature, and even in pieces played by boys in their schools, they treated Jansen as a heretic, declared and condemned. The *Almanack of the Jesuits* won a reply, too nearly in the same tone, from M. de Sâci,—*Les Enluminures de l'Almanach des Jésuites*. Arnould himself prudently kept silence upon these topics, turning his two-edged pen now against Protestantism and busying himself with his *Perpétuité de la Foi*.

The Jesuits meanwhile, through their Père Annat, Confessor

¹ *Entretiens . . . avec M. le Maître*, loc. cit., p. 367 seq.

² *Ib.*, pp. 375-6.

presently to the young King, were in favour at the Court. They won the ear of Mazarin, anxious now to conciliate the Pope; and, in a general assembly of Bishops summoned by that Minister, the Five Propositions were declared, with but four dissentient voices, to represent truly the teaching of Jansen. A Formula was drawn up, abjuring the condemned doctrine 'of Jansenius', which all ecclesiastics, and all members of a Religious Order were required to sign.

The action of the Bishops was felt painfully at Port Royal, as a blow dealt through that episcopal authority so faithfully upheld. Angélique spoke with some bitterness to her nephew of the 'Courtier Prelates', 'Slaves of the Court where the Jesuits are masters.'¹ She recalled her own zeal in transferring her convent from monastic to episcopal control, to be thus rewarded; but 'one must humble oneself and accept these humiliations which come from the hand of those who ought to protect us'.

'As for me,' she again declares her hopes, 'I do not think the persecution will spare me. M. de Langres called me the first daughter of M. de Saint-Cyran. The Jesuits accuse me of being in the full secret, conceiving there is one among us . . . ; they believe this House, where they know me to have great authority, to be of great service to the party. It will be a marvel if they leave me to end my life here. I am prepared to go and spend several years away from Port Royal, in some Convent governed by the Jesuits, and to maintain there profound silence. Nothing will be so annoying to me as to see them come to talk and undeceive me; but I will answer them nothing save that, forty years ago and more, after my conversion, I several times asked God, if He would not permit me to give up my Abbey as I passionately desired, that at least He would grant me the grace to spend the last years of my life in an unknown spot where I should not be esteemed as I was here, and where I should not be loved, so as to imitate Jesus Christ, Who was abandoned at death, and that I blessed God on seeing that through their means He was giving me the fulfilment of my desire.

'I believe, my nephew, that He will grant me this favour, because He has granted me another, which was to return to this desert. . . .'²

¹ *Entretiens . . . avec M. le Maître*, loc. cit., p. 378.

² *Ib.*, pp. 378-9.

She was not to be dissuaded of her belief that in such a convent she should find the coveted ill-usage. M. le Maître observed to her that, in whatever monastery she might be placed, she would meet with some kindness from women who like her were Religious, to which she replied :—

‘ You are mistaken. God will permit those who hold me confined in their House to think they do Him great service by treating me very harshly, that they may soon be relieved of an old woman represented to them as infected with heresy, as deceitful, hypocritical and malicious. They may well take offence alike at my words and my silence. And, moreover, the Sisters who are opposed to grace and are taught in the School of the Molinists are harsh, inhuman and cruel. I know it by experience.’ Thereupon, adds M. le Maître, ‘ She named to me one, who, she said, had spoken to her as a Turk or a Scythian might have done. ‘ Grace,’ she continued, ‘ is humble and the principle of humility, and humility is inseparable from gentleness. Confidence in one’s own strength is presumptuous, and all presumption is by nature rude and stern.’¹

We strike here on the limitations of our Mother’s Christian tolerance.

Angélique’s anticipations were, as she observed, made not by spirit of prophecy, but by natural reasoning. Though not fulfilled in her own person, the later history of the convent showed them not ungrounded.

Meanwhile the net was drawn closer. The Five Propositions were successfully fathered on Jansen, it remained only to convict Port Royal of ‘ Jansenism ’. The Jesuits watched for Arnauld to break his prudent silence.

The occasion was not long in coming. The enemies of Port Royal grew so bold that a priest of the Community of S. Sulpice—a body particularly prejudiced against the convent—went so far as to refuse absolution to the Duc de Liancourt, on the sole ground of his friendship with the recluses, and of the presence of his grandchild as boarder in the convent. S. Sulpice upheld the action of its priest, and the event successfully goaded Arnauld again to the fray.

In two letters, published under the titles *Première Lettre*

¹ *Entretiens. . . avec M. le Maître*, loc. cit., pp. 381-2.

à une Personne de Condition, and *Seconde Lettre à un Duc et Pair* (the influential friend of Port Royal, the Duc de Luines, is the person designated), Arnauld declared the position of the "Jansenists". Accepting the condemnation of the Five Propositions, he denied that they were to be found in the *Augustinus*, or that, as condemned, they represented its teaching. And, while upholding his authority in all articles of Faith, he denied the Pope's right to impose acceptance of matters of Fact. This famous distinction gave again another colour to the disputes, the doctrinal aspect now shifting to that of discipline; and the Jansenists again here, as in their respect for the Episcopacy, joined hands with the Gallican party in the Church. The policy, unhappily, of Louis XIV was Gallican only in so far as the King disputed power for himself with the Pope.

These letters gave the Jesuits their hoped-for opportunity. They referred them to the Sorbonne and, by dint of some intrigue and packing of the assembly—for opinion was very divided—, obtained (February, 1656) the censure of Arnauld, with his formal expulsion from that body.

Practical consequences at once threatened. The schools were to be broken up, the hermits dispersed, the convent deprived of its pupils and novices. A Royal Commission was sent to investigate matters at Port Royal des Champs.

CHAPTER XXIV

The *Lettres Provinciales*.—The Miracle of the Holy Thorn.—Days of Respite.

NOT yet, however, was the triumph of the Jesuits fulfilled. Port Royal tasted a respite of persecution,—three years granted, Angélique clear-sightedly foretold, in which to prepare for future suffering; three years of plenty before the time of famine, so Angélique the niece looked back on them.

The censure of Arnauld was the signal for a new defender of Port Royal, the event which called forth that more famous successor to the *Fréquente Communion*, the *Lettres Provinciales*. The brilliant wit and burning eloquence of the *Letters*, as they appealed to the general public, rapidly turned the tide of opinion in favour of Port Royal and against the Jesuits; to clinch the effect produced by these human weapons came, that same spring, what to Pascal and all Port Royal's friends appeared an unmistakable sign from Heaven—the Miracle of the Holy Thorn.

Blaise Pascal, whom we saw a few years earlier acting the part of grudging relative to his sister Jacqueline, had become now, if not one of the *Messieurs* of Port Royal—we may accept his testimony, though equivocal, in the *Letters*, that he did not deem himself one—, at least one with them in spirit and by temporary retreats amongst them. Many years earlier, when a youth of twenty, he had been touched, together with his father and sisters, to embrace the strict piety of the movement springing from Jansen and Saint-Cyran. At that time, the date of the *Fréquente Communion*, he it was who fanned Jacqueline's ardour to the steady flame it so constantly preserved. And although his own zeal cooled, and he became so far entangled in the world as to feel, like most worldlings, his income inadequate, he retained—a letter on his father's death (1651) sufficiently proves it—the pious turn of feeling and the

phraseology of a strict Christian. The second and decisive 'movement of grace' had now come, a sermon of M. Singlin's its immediate channel. M. Singlin became Pascal's Director of Conscience and at his advice the penitent, heartily sick of the world, entered upon a temporary retreat, first at Port Royal des Champs, then in Paris when some business called him thither, and then again at Les Champs. The tedium and distaste with which his mundane life had latterly inspired him yielded to happiness in his austere retreat. 'I know not,' Jacqueline, herself joyous, writes to him, 'how M. Singlin can put up with so joyous a penitent.'¹

Thus happy at release from 'the world' but with its polish fresh upon him, Pascal was among the recluses when the news of Arnauld's censure reached them. The story is well known: how Arnauld was urged to defend himself by an appeal to the public; how he wrote a defence and read it to the assembled hermits, Pascal among them; how it was received in dead silence, his friends recognizing it would not serve the turn. Then Arnauld, free, for all the long sharpening of his pen in controversy, from an author's susceptibility, turned to Pascal—'But you, who are young, write us something.'² Pascal the next morning submitted to them the draft of the first *Lettre à un Provincial*.

'*Ce sera goûté*,' the Hermits rightly prognosticated. The *Petites Lettres* or *Lettres Provinciales*, as these letters addressed to a friend in the provinces came to be inaccurately styled, were the literary event of the day. Curiosity as to the anonymous writer, the excellence of the writing—so excellent as to mark a new era in the French language—, united with the interest of the matter to keep the public on the stretch for each letter as it appeared.

With the self-possessed wit of a man of the world, Pascal set the intricacies of the theological dispute in truer proportion, exposing to the public the complications of the affair, the verbal differences and careful hedging employed by the enemies of Port Royal,—exposing also their personal animus. To yet

¹ *Mémoire sur la Vie de M. Paschal . . . Recueil de Pièces pour servir à l'Histoire de Port-Royal*. Utrecht, 1740, p. 268.

² *Ib.*, p. 278.

greater effect he brought his counter-attack against the Jesuits, his famous indictment of their casuistry. This led the quarrel successfully back to the moral field. As Arnauld had denounced, in the *Fréquente Communion*, the danger to serious piety arising from easy-going Jesuit practice, Pascal now denounced the danger to common morality from their casuist teaching.

The priesthood throughout France were roused, and the *Lettres Provinciales* were followed by more regular protests of the curés. When the Jesuits wrote an Apology for the casuists, their work in its turn met with censure from the Sorbonne.

The Attic salt of the *Letters* was scarce tasted by our nuns. In their annals we find no mention of this powerful weapon of defence. The light handling of these momentous questions of grace, and the witty baiting of the naïve Jesuit Father, mouthpiece of the casuists, could but doubtfully commend itself to the Mère Angélique,¹ and the work would not penetrate to the secluded Sisters in general. In truth, the appeal to the public arena, and to very human powers of enjoyment, had its drawback. The topic of grace, thus set *à la mode*, lost something of weight. Ridicule cast, and quickly caught up by active wit, upon the hair-splitting distinctions of grace adequate and grace efficacious, did not tend to penitential waiting upon the movements of grace. The *Fréquente Communion* had brought penitents to Port Royal; the *Petites Lettres* served as good reading to Madame de Sévigné in the country. Fervour, hidden for the occasion by Pascal, cooled to calm partisanship in Boileau's polished verse; the burning theme of grace became a mere topic of conversation, discussed at leisure by the animals of La Fontaine's *Fables*.

The *Letters* served, however, the immediate purpose and turned the tide of public opinion rapidly against the Jesuits. Whether they would have sufficed alone to divert attack from Port Royal is uncertain. They had delighted the public for a couple of months when God Himself, so Port Royal inevitably saw the matter, took up the defence of His servants and of His Grace, working at Port Royal a signal miracle.

¹ Cf. *Lettres de la Mère Angélique*, vol. iii, p. 203; and, upon this subject, Strowski, *Pascal et son Temps*, vol. iii, p. 203 seq.

The object of the miracle was Pascal's little niece, Marguerite Perier, at school in the convent and suffering from a terrible fistula in the eye. The letters of Jacqueline Pascal to her sister, the child's mother, give the course of the event,—from the decision of the doctors to burn out the malady, as a last resource, with hot irons, up to the triumphant moment when the child of ten, raised on a buffet that all might see her, was the centre of observation at a crowded service of thanksgiving for her complete and painless cure by miracle.

A relic, the splinter of a thorn from the sacred crown, had been lent, after going the round of sundry other Paris convents, to Port Royal, on March 24, 1656:—

‘In order that the whole Community might have the consolation of seeing it before giving it back, it was placed, with great reverence, upon a small altar in the Choir, and all the Sisters went to kiss it kneeling, after having sung an anthem in honour of the sacred crown; after which all the children went one after another. Sister Flavie, their Mistress, on seeing Margot’ (the little Perier) ‘approach quite close to it, made her a sign to touch her eye with the reliquary, and she herself took up the holy relic and applied it without reflection.

‘In the evening Sister Flavie, who thought no more of what she had done, heard Margot saying to one of her little Sisters: *My eye is cured, it does not hurt any more.* She was no little surprised; she went to her and found that this swelling in the corner of the eye, which in the morning was as big as the end of one's finger, very long and very hard, was no longer there at all, and that her eye, which before the touching of the relic was painful to see, appeared as healthy as the other, without any difference being noticeable. . . . I leave you to think what astonishment she was in. She did not, however, build great hopes upon it, and contented herself with telling the Mother Agnès how things were, waiting for time to show whether the cure were as genuine as it seemed.

‘The Mother Agnès was so kind as to tell me about it next day, and, as one did not dare to hope so great a marvel had been effected in so short a time, she said to me that, if the child continued to be well and there seemed likelihood God willed her cure by this means, she would very gladly beg M. de la Potherie (the ecclesiastic who owned the relic) to repeat the favour he had done us in lending the relic, in order to complete the miracle. But up to now that has not been necessary; for although it is a week since this occurred—

because I was unable to finish my letter last Tuesday—there is not the smallest trace of her malady, and it requires now incomparably more faith for those who had not seen it to believe she had it, than for those who saw it to believe she could have been cured, in a moment, only by a miracle as great and as evident as the restoring of sight to the blind. . . .

‘Nevertheless, that we might not claim too lightly such special favour, it was thought well to show her to M. Dalencé (the doctor) who had seen her not long before . . . and who had found her so bad that he had condemned her to the remedy by fire without hesitation, giving us his reasons.

‘It is a double joy to receive favour from God when one has the hatred of men. Pray God for us, that He may prevent us from exalting ourselves in the one and of losing courage for the other, and that He will make us look upon both as equally the outcome of His mercy. . . .

‘M. Dalencé has seen Margot and judged the cure complete and miraculous ; but he has fixed a week later to make sure. Until then no word of it will be breathed. . . .’

(We spare the reader the details which follow of the child’s offensive and disfiguring ailment.)

‘When M. Dalencé came on the 31st, in the morning, she was shown to him without anything being said. He began to examine her on each side without saying anything, he pressed the eye, put his spatula up her nose ; and, with all that, was very astonished to find nothing at all. He was asked if he did not remember the malady he had seen, and he answered naively : *That is what I am looking for, but I no longer find it.* I begged him to look in her mouth. He did so and put in his spatula, and he found so little that he began to laugh and said : *There is nothing at all.* Thereupon Sister Flavie told him what had occurred. He made her repeat it more than once, for he is a very sensible and prudent man ; and after listening quietly, and having asked if it disappeared all at once, and the child herself having replied it did, he said he would give his attestation, whenever one wished, that it was impossible this could have taken place without a miracle.

‘He does not wish to assert, any more than we, that the malady will not return, because God alone knows, but he asserts that at present there is none at all and that she is in perfect health ; these are his own words, or the equivalent. He has exhorted us, however, to make no report for the present, and to confine our movements of gratitude within our House, so far as possible, for fear of false judgements. . . .’

On April the 14th, the several physicians and surgeons who had seen the child signed a certificate attesting the miraculous nature of the cure. Whatever prudent reserve might at first be exercised, the matter was soon noised abroad. A regular inquiry was made by the ecclesiastical authorities, and resulted in the official 'verification' of the miracle, given in October of the same year. In consequence a solemn thanksgiving was held at Port Royal.

Jacqueline writes again to the child's mother :—

'We were made to begin the Solemnization the eve before, and we sang the Vespers of the Sacred Crown. . . . That nothing might be wanting, my little Sister Marguerite (who is no longer called Margot) was in the Choir among the Novices, because it was her feast (for as a rule the little ones are not admitted).

'On the morrow from early morning there were numbers of people in the Church, although it rained a great deal. A small Altar was erected in our Choir, close to the grille, which was left open, adorned with white and covered with a beautiful chalice veil, upon which our Mother placed the Reliquary of the Holy Thorn surrounded by a number of lights. M. the Grand Vicar, who performed the ceremony, came for it with the cross, accompanied by sixteen deacons holding candles, and he carried it with ceremony under the canopy, as in the procession of the Holy Sacrament, as far as the Altar, two Deacons constantly burning incense; and he set it upon a beautifully adorned little tabernacle, which had been made expressly. Meanwhile all the Sisters, with their great veils lowered, sang on their knees before the grille the Hymn *Exite filiae Sion* and the Anthem *O Corona*. They held lighted candles, as did also the child, who was before our Choir, in the very front of the grille, dressed in secular clothes, very neatly but very modestly, in a grey frock and a cap [*une coëffe*], kneeling upon two great hassocks so as to be high enough to be seen by a crowd of people who clambered where they could to see her.

'Then the small altar was removed, and the Grand Vicar said Holy Mass, which was sung for the Sacred Crown with great solemnity; during which the centre of the grille remained open that the people might have the gratification of seeing the child, who was close to it upon a Prie-Dieu covered by a carpet; and she had a lighted candle in front of her, and, behind, a chair to sit upon when she needed. She stayed there with as much self-possession as though it had been her ordinary place, standing and kneeling at the right times,

modestly as though very devout, and with as good a grace as though she had been made to practise it. . . .

‘This is all I have to tell, save to add that, the weather becoming finer in the course of the ceremony, the Church did not empty the whole day, and so great a number of copies of the Sentence of the Grand Vicar were sold that, at a *sol* apiece, some hundred francs were taken in the court of the Church alone. . . .’¹

The hour of Port Royal had come. Persecution itself turned, for the time being, to its glory. The Commissioners sent at the beginning of April to report further on the orthodoxy of the nuns, came in time to see with their own eyes the child cured and to hear the attestation of the doctors. The attempts of the Jesuits, in a work entitled *Le Rabat-joie des Jansénistes*, to decry the miracle, were unsuccessful. As we have read, the cure, which indeed was singular enough, was verified as miraculous by the ecclesiastical powers. Paris was convinced of it, so too the Court with Anne of Austria, and the miracle was taken as unanswerable witness to the persecuted innocence of Port Royal. The Jesuits were alone in disputing it,—but among these was the Père Annat, who ruled the conscience of the young King, Louis XIV.

For the time persecution ceased. The hermits reassembled; the schools flourished again; the children and novices at the convent remained undisturbed. Supreme sign of favour and occasion of joy to the Nuns, M. Singlin, hitherto only Confessor, was appointed Director to both convents, Port Royal in Paris and Port Royal des Champs.

Yet this manifestation of Providence had also its drawback. The convent was too sober to be led astray now into any such deliberate seeking for miracles as had blemished it under the guidance of the Bishop of Langres (*vide* Ch. IX, pp. 145–6). A sequence of miracles worked by the Holy Thorn, now given by its owner to Port Royal, was but the inevitable consequence of the prestige won by the relic and of its exposure in the church; the convent was too deeply imbued with the maxim that humility and reform should be the fruit of all such special

¹ *Mémoire sur la Vie de M. Paschal*, Recueil . . ., 1740, p. 283 seq.

favour, to suffer greatly or be hysterically affected. But the miracle formed a dangerous precedent for later degenerate days when, Port Royal destroyed, the movement of 'Jansenism' still went forward. The cures wrought by the Holy Thorn had an ugly echo in the miracles at the tomb of the *diacre Paris*, from 1727 to 1732, until the hysterical excesses committed by the *convulsionnaires* in the churchyard of S. Médard, which contained it, caused the closure of that precinct:—

‘De par le roi, défense à Dieu
De faire miracle en ce lieu.¹’

The miracle was taken as a sign that Heaven acknowledged Port Royal as true daughter of the Church. To posterity it may serve at least to show that Port Royal followed Roman Catholic tradition. But more distinctive of its spirit within the Church was the attitude of caution towards such manifestations, the avoidance of parade and idle talk, the application to inward reform and spiritual growth.

In fairness to that spirit we may close this tale of a miracle with words from Angélique to an Abbé anxious to keep record of the cures afterwards wrought in rapid succession by the relic exposed in the church of the convent:—

‘For my part I may tell you I cannot approve of so much inquiry; God knows for what reason He performs His miracles, and He will derive glory from them in the way which pleases Him, without any need for us to meddle, or to do anything save adore His divine Providence, and bless His goodness with deep humility and gratitude. . . . A record should rather serve those who are to come after us, making them reverence the guidance of God, than distract us from it. The world makes to-do enough about it, and I believe it is God’s purpose that the world should talk and that we should keep silence, not only we but all our true friends.’

A propos of another miracle discussed in a convent, she had written earlier, ‘In God’s name do not let this miracle be spoken of . . . since instead of producing in these Sisters a fresh, secret and inward trust in the Holy Virgin, it has only

¹ Inscription written in consequence upon the gate. Cp. *Recueil des Miracles opérés au tombeau de M. de Paris, Diacre*, à Utrecht, 1733; and Sainte-Beuve, *Port-Royal*, vol. iii, p. 198.

caused talk. I am certain not one of them has prayed Her in consequence to deliver her from her failings.'¹

And now, on occasion of a further miracle in the convent worked by the Holy Thorn, she bade the community offer to God 'the hymn of silence, which alone is worthy of Him', assuring them that, if this miracle were made the subject of discourse and tittle-tattle, she would give sound penances.²

The Convent entered upon this time of respite with the Mother Marie des Anges as Abbess, in succession to Angélique who, thrice re-elected, was by the Rule no longer eligible.

In Marie des Anges we have the perfect nun, the figure upon whom the eye of Angélique rested with complacency from the moment when, a young girl, she had entered the convent scarce hoping to be received,³ to these latter days of her election as Abbess at Port Royal after long filling the like post at Maubuisson.

In the early days of Port Royal's removal to Paris, Angélique had been asked to name among her nuns one fit to take charge of Maubuisson, again left by the death of Mme de Soissons without an Abbess. Only this Sister Marie des Anges *Suireau* had seemed to her to possess the requisite virtue. She named her, and then, bethinking her that the girl's obscure birth would add greatly to the external difficulties of the charge, in that 'Royal Abbey', would have drawn back. The appointment however was made. Once assured it was her duty, the Sister, whose perfect obedience was, in the eyes of Port Royal, her best title to command, accepted the office in all simplicity.⁴

Her merits, and her trials, as Abbess of Maubuisson, are recorded at full length in the work, *Modèle de Foi et de Patience*, by a Port-Royal nun, from which we have already drawn for the history of that convent. Under her persuasive rule, those

¹ *Lettres de la Mère Angélique*, vol. i, pp. 138-9, and vol. iii, pp. 348-9.

² *Relation de la Sœur Anne-Marie de Sainte-Eustoquie de Flechelles de Bregy: Sur les Instructions que la Mère Angélique donnait à ses filles*, *Mémoires pour servir* . . . , vol. ii, pp. 580-1.

³ v. ante ch. iii, p. 48.

⁴ *Relation . . . par la Mère Marie-Angélique*, *Mémoires pour servir* . . . , vol. i, p. 303 seq.

ancient dames, now truly ancient and falling into decrepitude, were coaxed out of their mundane ways and into something of piety. Even Mme de la Serre, former accomplice of Mme d'Estrées, subdued her proud and violent spirit in the hands of this young Mother, persistent and firm beneath her mildness.¹

But the outside difficulties were too great. The opposition and intrigues of the monks 'made her rule a martyrdom', says the Mère Angélique, kindling with wrath at the thought of these false Religious; human wisdom will perhaps find the submissive nun-like virtue of Marie des Anges little fitted to the case. She resigned, very gladly, after twenty-two years of rule, in favour of an Abbess more agreeable to the monks, and returned to Port Royal the same in modest gentleness—it is Angélique who testifies—as when she left.²

She begged to be placed again in the novitiate, to purge herself, as it were, from the habit of command; and 'her request was acceded to, though not as she had meant it. For she was placed among the Novices, not as one of them, but as their Mistress'. And when at length Angélique had completed, as Abbess, the extreme term of twelve years permitted by the rule, and could no longer be held at the post by the wishes of her nuns, Marie des Anges was, with her warm support, chosen in her stead. Elected first (1654) in days of threatening difficulty for Port Royal, the new Abbess left the management however, so far as might be, to the former Mothers, Angélique and Agnès; and only when continued now (1657) for a second term, prepared, at the bidding of M. Singlin, to take real as well as nominal charge.³

In personal matters, meanwhile, Angélique, full of years as she now was, and of infirmities, rejoiced to pay prompt unquestioning obedience to the younger, though also aged, Mother, whom she, as girl-Abbess, had received, a child, into the convent. By such discipline of her still imperious will she saw for herself the best preparation for trial to come; preparation also for death, which her ever growing malady

¹ v. *ante* ch. v, p. 95.

² *Relation . . . par la Mère Marie Angélique . . . , Mémoires pour servir . . .*, vol. i, pp. 310-11.

³ *Modèle de Foi et de Patience*, p. 500.

warned her could not be far distant. Submission to remedies, some of them indeed more trying than any penance, and obedience to the easier régime imposed, was the chief discipline now open to her.

Even from the *Maison du S.^t Sacrement*, Angélique, not yet fifty, had written : ‘ I am old, and in very bad health, so that there is little likelihood I shall live long.’¹ From that time onwards, there are increasing references to illness in the nuns’ narratives concerning her and, little as her energy and vigour would seem to have been impaired, ill-health, apparently always of a dropsical character, took with the years increasing hold. She had to fight now against the solicitude of her nuns, more eager to procure alleviation for her bodily suffering than to aid her in moral discipline. A thought which troubled her also at this time was that the Sisters, foolish in their love, would talk of her after death as a saint and would commit, in her regard, the convent follies which she so greatly disliked. She saw with distress their eagerness to collect relics and proclaim miracles, exemplified recently after the death (in 1653) of her Sister Anne Eugénie,—bright romantic spirit, and ‘truly saint-like’, Angélique herself acknowledged. She spoke of this matter to her nephew, M. le Maître:—

‘ She told me,’ he records,—‘ it was in 1654,—that she feared lest our Sisters should treat her after her death as the Carmelites had treated the Mother Madeleine, that is to say as a Saint, although they had no ground, since she had never had visions, ecstasies and trances like the Mother Madeleine. But that she said so because the Sisters, without telling her, had made a compound of sundry things belonging to my Sister Anne Eugénie, such as her blood, her hair, and her veil ; and had made medals of it, one of which she showed me. I looked at her, and told her boldly that she need not be anxious on that score, and that her Nuns would not commit these follies after her death, that we would prevent it, that they were sensible and discreet, and that, even though they had made these medals without asking her, I did not think them to blame, for my Sister Anne Eugénie was in truth a Saint, and even the Carmelites who had known her, the Mother Marguerite Acarie among them, declared her sanctity : that she ought accordingly to forgive so innocent a love for their Sister,

¹ *Lettres de la Mère Angélique*, vol. i, p. 59.

whom she herself knew to have performed miracles at Port Royal in Paris and here ; and that they need not do the same for her, for she was not so good and saint-like as Sister Anne.

‘ I said this to her as though in earnest, and she took it so, replying : “ No alas ! my poor Sister Anne ! Were I like her, I would forgive them their excessive love for me as for her. But what vexes me is that they judge of me by the things God causes me to do, because He has made me Superior to sanctify them by my Conduct, and not for my own sanctification ; for in this our Sisters are greatly deceived . . . An Abbess may be wiser and more enlightened to direct than all her Nuns, and yet be the least holy in the Monastery. This is what they do not take into consideration . . . This false and idle esteem and praise makes me groan and weep.” To which I responded : Take comfort, my Mother, take comfort. Nothing shall be said of you after death that is not strictly true. You know that we do not love falsehoods in the Lives of the Saints, all the more not in one like yours. Our Sisters have the love of truth engraved on their hearts. She answered me : “ Unless they are checked, they will tell a hundred tales of me, for they love me too much. I know them, they are not sensible in this respect.” ’¹

The death of ‘ poor Sister Anne ’, saint-like as she acknowledged her, had left upon Angélique herself an impression deeply painful if more consonant with her sense of the awful dignity of the event, than was the nuns’ raking up of miracles. They thought of Anne Eugénie, in her joyous serenity, as of one little touched by human weakness and distress. She herself had told how, in a moment of discouragement, the sight of the starry skies above Port Royal des Champs had brought instant peace to her soul.² But Angélique had seen her at the last in deeper trouble, and an untimely call of duty had played the part self-seeking oftener plays, and had made the elder sister fail the younger in the hour of need.

‘ In one moment,’ Angélique told her nuns, who had commented on the apparent exemption of some saints from humiliation and suffering, ‘ God can inflict on a soul the deepest humiliation conceivable. He has no need of time to

¹ *Entretiens . . . avec M. le Maître, Mémoires pour servir . . .*, p. 349 seq.

² *Mémoire de la Sœur Anne-Eugénie de l’Incarnation Arnauld, sur le premier esprit de Port-Royal, sur la propre conduite, et sur le bien que M. de S. Cyran établit dans le Monastère, Mémoires pour servir . . .*, vol. iii, p. 365.

humiliate . . . I remember constantly the last words my Sister Anne Eugénie said to me: for, when I left her in her death-agony to go and assist another Sister who was also dying, I said to her, before leaving, that I was going to Sister Françoise Catherine' (a lay-sister) 'and that she should stay meanwhile with God and trust in Him. Whereupon she answered me (and in the greatest conceivable anguish), "But I have offended God so deeply!"—I confess that nothing so awes me or makes me better realize the greatness of the judgements of God than when I recall the extreme anguish in which I saw my Sister Anne Eugénie at that moment,—she who had ever led so pure, so holy and exemplary a life; and the pain I had in leaving her, so near her end, was so great that I still cannot think of it without experiencing such keen sorrow as pierces my heart. As she said this, she could not refrain from great weeping, and she added: "I believe God permitted such an occurrence to be a lifelong affliction to me, for I do not think I can ever be consoled about it; and what further increased my sorrow was that my presence was of no avail to my Sister Françoise Catherine, who had entirely lost consciousness before I reached her."

'Our Mother, after saying this,' so the nun, her niece Angélique de S. Jean most probably, who records her *Entretiens* or *Conférences*, tells us, 'tried to repress her tears and, striving for self-control, went on: "I take back what I said, that I should not have left Sister Anne Eugénie. I had to do it, because, although my presence was not necessary to Sister Françoise Catherine, that was the action by which God purposed me to help Sister Anne Eugénie. I do not doubt but that by doing this I was more useful to her than if I had remained constantly beside her; and I believe that God permitted it both for the good of Sister Anne Eugénie and for my own, because, although it was very painful, and the memory is so still, I did it with goodwill, and I take comfort, because there is no good, no happiness or true satisfaction save in the accomplishment of one's duty."—('These,' adds the recording nun, 'are her actual words.')

¹

The death of Anne Eugénie (on January the 1st, 1653) had fallen in that year of crowding and busy hospitality consequent on the Fronde.

Of the five sisters in the flesh whom Angélique had won to her side at Port Royal, only Agnès—last survivor as first help-mate—now remained. Marie Claire had died long since, happy

¹ *Entretiens . . . de la . . . Mère Marie-Angélique Arnauld*, pp. 162-4.

in penitence. Madelon, the fair child 'who, by God's grace, never knew that she was beautiful,' closed the uneventful chapter of her convent life in 1649 at the age of forty, after long illness patiently borne. The eldest, Mme le Maître, who had taken the long-coveted veil on the death, a few years previously, of her husband, had also died, as Sœur Catherine de S. Jean, in 1650, at the close of the first Fronde, during the disgrace and imprisonment of its leaders.

Madame le Maître, the Monica of Port Royal, had the satisfaction of receiving the last spiritual offices from her younger son, M. de Saci, as of leaving her firstborn, M. le Maître, in full vigour of pious energy at Port Royal des Champs, translating and writing *Lives of the Saints*, informally assisting in the teaching of the elder boys, and varying his literary tasks with manual labour.

M. de Saci survived many years, the saintly guide of Port Royal in its latter days of trouble, living to undergo imprisonment in the Bastille as his model, Saint-Cyran, had suffered it at Vincennes.¹ But M. le Maître died now during this lull in the storm, leaving his proposed *Life of the Mère Angélique* perforce unaccomplished. Only the notes we have so often cited, of his talks with her, remained as witness of the innocent treason.

The Abbess Marie des Anges also preceded Angélique to the grave. On her second election in 1657 she dutifully sought to exercise her authority without help now from the former Mothers. But after a year she fell ill and died, in the same sweet charity in which she had consistently lived, responding cordially with good sayings to all who approached her, and gladly foretelling that the Mother Agnès would succeed her in the charge of Abbess.

One 'effect of her charity' is narrated. The night before her death there sat watching by the fire with the Mother Agnès, Madame d'Aumont, the lady who as Benefactress resided in the convent. Believing that the patient slept, she did not speak to her. But the Mother Marie des Anges, not asleep but wrapt in peaceful prayer, saw her and sent a message to

¹ v. *Mémoires . . . par M. Fontaine*. M. de Saci had in Fontaine, as Saint-Cyran in Lancelot, a naïve disciple and biographer.

her by the nursing Sister to the effect that she would gratefully recall her charity to the House before God, and, if she received mercy, would think of her first of all. Madame d'Aumont, gratified, saw no deeper meaning in the words.

She herself meanwhile was full of the fear of death,

'and scarce dared look upon dying persons. Nevertheless her own death was very near and she did not think of it.

'The Friday after the death of the Mother des Anges, she dreamt that she saw the Mother in a great plain, calling her with a gay and pleasant countenance, and making her a sign to pass quickly the great lake which separated them; and that, as she refused to go for fear of the water . . ., the Mother des Anges showed her beautiful pearls and jewels, promising to give them her when she should have passed.

'This dream somewhat disturbed Madame d'Aumont all the rest of the night.' The nun to whom she recounted it in the morning was not consoling. 'It means,' she said when asked its meaning, 'death.' 'Madame d'Aumont, yet more disturbed but wishing to dissimulate her fear and the ground of it, replied vehemently—"Oh yes! it means death, that is a fine tale, it means that I have dreamt—that is what it means." She diverted herself all day in order to drive off the thought of death, which came back always in spite of herself, but, with all her efforts, she could not drive it from her mind. Her dream came back to her always in spite of herself, and by Saturday evening she saw the explanation. For she was seized with an illness, which at first seemed slight, but which brought her nevertheless to the grave on the following Thursday, December the 19th, nine days after the death of the Mother des Anges, who, as there is reason to believe, obtained for her deliverance from the fear she had of death, as well as from the wretchedness and sin wherewith life is filled.'¹ "

The Mère Agnès, she, too, aged and infirm, was chosen; as the Mère Marie des Anges, not needing perhaps prophetic vision, had foretold, to resume the charge of Abbess. She was in Paris at the time, where also this death occurred—Angélique at *Les Champs*.

¹ *Modèle de Foi et de Patience*, p. 523 seq.

CHAPTER XXV

Renewal of 'Persecution'.—The last Days and Death of the Mère Angélique.

THE two aged Mothers, Angélique and Agnès, remained thus last survivors of their generation of Arnauld sisters, to face renewal of attack upon the Community, and to see ruin, as human reason judges, threaten the work upon which they had set their energies from girlhood up. Barely two years elapsed after the death of the Abbess Marie des Anges and the election of the Mère Agnès in her stead before fresh alarms reached the convent. The year 1660, which marked, with the royal marriage, the true beginning of the reign of Louis XIV, was one ominous to Port Royal. As the young King took up the reins of government, the prejudice which his Jesuit advisers had instilled into his mind came into active play. The death of Mazarin, from which for a moment hermits and nuns hoped better things, only left them in the hands of a more resolute enemy. The Queen Mother, Anne of Austria, however her ears might be filled with evil tales of *ces Messieurs*, preserved always a liking for Arnauld d'Andilly, and was open to a turn in favour of the convent when an event, such as the miracle, gave rise to it; the mind of Louis XIV on the contrary was closed to favourable views, and inexorable to resistance shown to accredited authority. The impression produced by the miracle faded away; that of the *Lettres Provinciales* was more permanent, but one of its most potent effects was, unhappily, the intensified enmity of the Jesuits.

At the Assembly of Clergy held in 1660 the question of the Five Propositions was again raised; and signature to the Formula denouncing them was again demanded, not merely from ecclesiastics and nuns, but even from regents and masters in schools. And now the order for dispersal of schools and recluses at Port Royal was renewed, this time to be enforced;

and with it went the order, more directly touching the convent, that all pupils there, and presently that all postulants and novices, should be dismissed.

The Paris House was first dealt with, Port Royal des Champs—connected mainly in the public view with the recluses—taking as convent the secondary place. To Paris accordingly Angélique now repaired, that, aged and infirm as she was, she might die in the heart of danger. To the watching nuns, the cruel course of events kept even pace with the progress of her last malady; she herself cherished a hope that with her death there might come peace to the convent.

Our faithful chronicler, Angélique de S. Jean, was at her aunt's side throughout these last troubled months, and from her pen we have the:—

*Narrative of the illness and death of the Mother Marie
Angélique Arnauld, Reformer of Port Royal*¹

'The Mother Angélique had spent the whole winter of the year 1660 at Port Royal des Champs, in a very languid and feeble state, not having properly recovered after a severe illness which she had had the previous summer. We sent word to her,' Angélique de S. Jean, who was at the time in Paris, narrates, 'of all that was taking place here (in Paris), and of the storm which seemed to be gathering for us. All her replies indicated extraordinary vigour and constancy, and showed her prepared for all; to the point that, on receiving news during Lent that matters seemed likely to be smoothed down, and that there was more likelihood of it than one could ever have thought, she wrote forcibly that neither did she credit it, that the time to suffer had come; and she desired to think only of preparing for it.

'It soon appeared that she had judged rightly. She was accordingly not surprised when, in Easter week, she was sent the order given by the King, as he left for Fontainebleau, to the Grand-Vicars, to remove our Superior (M. Singlin), and was informed of the purpose entertained of forcing us to send away our Boarders. This blow struck her heart in its tenderest spot. Her perfect submission to the Direction which God had given us, and the extraordinary esteem in which she held such a gift, upon which all the welfare of communities

¹ *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de Port-Royal*, vol. ii, p. 123 seq.

depends, made her behold this purpose of depriving us of it as one of the greatest evils which could befall us. But she bore it with that serenity of spirit and courage which, all her life, appeared on the greatest occasions. And, as though she feared to have less share in our sufferings when absent from the place where they were to begin, she wrote, the morning after receiving this news, that, whatever love she might have had at another time for her desert, in the present state of affairs she thought it well, if they approved, for her to come to Paris to await events and be of any use she could. This was agreed; and she departed from Port Royal des Champs the Saturday before Quasimodo, April the 23rd, 1661, after having bid farewell to the whole Community with amazing goodness and vigour, comforting and fortifying them for all that might happen, in a manner which showed well enough she did not expect to see them again.

On leaving the Monastery, she found her brother, M. d'Andilly, in the outer court, waiting to bid her farewell. As he approached her, she said to him: "Good-bye, my brother, be of good courage whatever happens." He answered her: "My Sister, fear nothing, I am full of courage." But she responded: "My brother, my brother, let us be humble. Let us remember that humility without strength is cowardice; but that courage without humility is presumption."

While she was on the way, an Ecclesiastic, who was returning from here (Port Royal in Paris) to Port Royal des Champs, met the carriage, and approached the Mother to tell her that the Civil Lieutenant had just left this Convent and had taken the names of all the boarders, with intention of dismissing them by the King's order. She replied without distress: "Well, Monsieur, God be praised. I beg you carry this news to our Sisters, and bid them be troubled about nothing, and that one has but to hope in God." Then speaking to those with her in the carriage: "One must," she said, "render thanks to God for all things and at all times. Let us repeat together the *Te Deum*." Which they did on the spot.

When she arrived, she found us for the most part very sad, and some in tears. She looked at us with a frank and confident air:

"What!" she said, "I believe there is weeping here. Come, my children, how is this! Have you no faith? And what is this that dismays us?"

"What! are men bestirring themselves! Well, but they are flies, are you afraid of them? You trust in God, and are afraid of something? Believe me, fear Him alone, and all will go well." Then lifting her eyes to Heaven, she said:

“My God have pity upon Thy children : My God, Thy Holy will be done.”

‘She said all this with such strength and kindness that, in a moment, she dried our tears. Every one felt herself penetrated by I know not what spirit of strength of grace which seemed diffused upon her lips, and which passed even into the hearts of those to whom she spoke, driving out all the bitterness and sadness.’

The tears of the convent were dried only for the moment. Angélique’s force of character did not suffice to cheer the hearts of the children and novices condemned to leave the convent, and delivered over, as all their training made them feel, to ravening wolves:—

‘From that day the House became a house of tears, and all re-echoed with the sobs and tears of thirty-three children and of several girls already admitted to the Novitiate, who awaited as their death-warrant the moment when they should be forced to leave the House. The number at Port Royal des Champs was about the same, and the sorrow equal of those who expected the like sentence. The Mother Angélique, whose tenderness and love for all these children exceeded that of a real mother, felt her heart torn, despite her supernatural courage, by the sorrow of this separation ; which moved her far more on account of the dangers to which were exposed all these souls, whom she loved for God’s sake and had received from His hand, than for the mere grief of losing sight of them, which would have been nothing to her force of mind but for this other consideration.

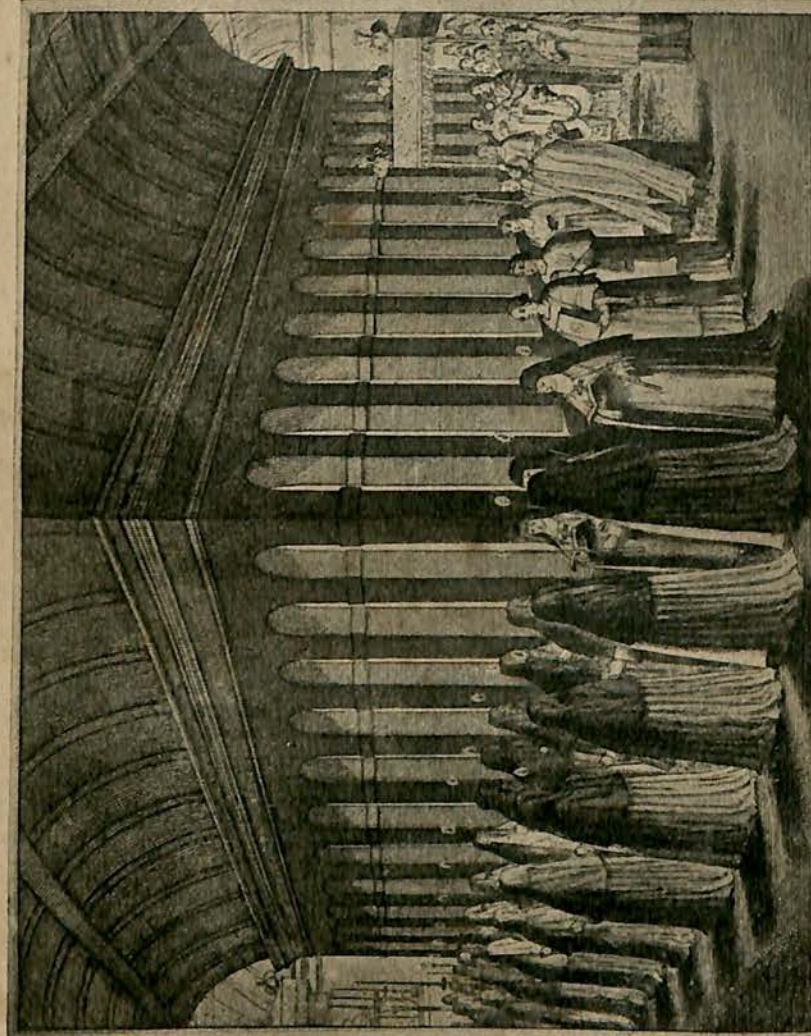
‘At all hours of the day this spectacle was renewed, as they came to take away, one after the other, these poor little lambs, who did not keep silence but raised their cries even to Heaven when they came to say farewell, and to part from her who had nurtured them with such care in her bosom. She comforted them ; she exhorted them to be of good courage ; and, with so many grounds for weakness, her spirit sustained the like strength ; but her body, already greatly enfeebled, could not long hold out. For, from the first, she entirely lost the power of sleep ; and although she forced herself to eat, as she often said, she could not force herself to sleep ; so that, passing the nights in almost unbroken wakefulness, she employed the time for the most part in writing letters, giving directions about sundry matters, and sustaining by her advice, and by words filled with the Spirit of God, her Sisters of Port Royal des Champs, with whom, in their affliction, she was no less

present through her love and charity, than she was here in actual presence. These nights of watching weakened her so extraordinarily that she changed visibly. Although so feeble that she could scarcely hold herself upright, she did not fail to be active, and to speak and go everywhere where her presence was required, although she said frequently she felt herself dying, and that she was sure not to go very far, because she sometimes felt so ill she thought she might die any moment.

‘From that time she had death so present, and was so occupied with the thought of preparing for it by endurance of all the afflictions with which God was visiting us that . . . she could not longer participate in anything which might call off and distract her mind from this humble preparation for every evil.

‘The blow she felt most keenly was when M. Singlin was ordered to withdraw, or rather when he had to retire to avoid this order. . . . Nevertheless she bore up on this, as on all other occasions, save that she realized the struggle between nature and faith would soon be over, because the former was about to give way ; and accordingly, after various matters had been for some time discussed in the parlour, on the day we bade him farewell, she begged us to desist and leave her a little time to confess, because she thought she might die the next day from the weakness she felt, and her life seemed to her to hang by a thread, as was only too apparent in her countenance.

‘After the exit of the Boarders, there came a fresh order to dismiss all the Postulants. She had needs be present erect at this sacrifice, and, on the 5th of May, she herself escorted to the door Mademoiselle de Luines and Mademoiselle de Bagnol, who left together, and to whom she had been the genuine Mother, since she had brought them up almost from the cradle, and their relatives had given them to her with a true movement of piety, so to nurture them that they might be worthy to be offered to God ; which had given her a special tenderness for them. The sorrow of these children would have penetrated the heart even of strangers. Hers was more than pierced, but she did not fail to preserve her calm. When Madame la Duchesse de Chevreuse, who came to take these girls, expressed her admiration at her strength, she replied with amazing vigour : “Madame, when God no longer is, I shall lose courage, but so long as God be God I shall hope in Him.” And embracing Mademoiselle de Luines whom Madame de Chevreuse begged her to comfort : “Come,” she said, “my child, hope in God, trust with all your heart in His infinite goodness, and do not let your courage sink. We



PROCESSION DES RELIGIEUSES DE PORT ROYAL A LA FESTE DU S. SACREMENT

M. J. B. de la Motte sculp. par G. J. de la Motte del.

PROCESSION OF NUNS OF PORT ROYAL

From engraving by Madeleine Hortemels

shall meet again elsewhere, where men will not have the power to separate us."

'Seeing that things grew worse from day to day, and that there were threats of expelling the Novices who had recently taken the Veil, we endeavoured to add new practices of penance to the prayers already being said. Processions, barefoot, were proposed, in which all the Holy Relics should be carried, to implore the intercession of the Saints with God. The suggestion was made in the Mother's presence, and we wanted her, if she had strength enough to take part, to carry a Relic, which was not heavy, of the true Cross. She felt much weaker than she allowed to be seen, but would not express the difficulty she would have in doing it, taking as a providence of God the thought entertained that she very well could. She let this decide her in a thing she would not have ventured to undertake, had her opinion been asked. She did it accordingly on the roth of May and carried the Cross, but she gave way under her burden, and, on entering the Choir, was forced to sink upon the ground, whence she could not rise. For all that one could do, was to assist her to her room. She was put to bed, where for two whole days she remained in so great a state of exhaustion that she could neither see nor hear what was said, and she passed from that into the full course of her severe and long illness,—God desiring to show us by this that she would carry the Cross with us, but that she would be overwhelmed by its weight, and that He would add to the weight of ours the sorrow of losing a person who aided us to sustain it, and whose strength and charity were the very greatest props of our weakness.'

Thenceforth to the end, for Angélique, the scene is a prolonged deathbed. One last effort she was able, however, to make on behalf of her convent:—

'A few days after thus taking to her bed she was seized with difficulty of breathing, so serious that, one midnight, she would have been given the last Sacrament, had not the oppression been somewhat relieved. It was at this time, after the Novices had left, and such extraordinary acts of violence had shown how strangely the piety of the King had been prejudiced against this House, to lead him to undertake such unexampled things, that she thought herself bound to render to her House the last service of which she was capable, vindicating its innocence in a letter to the Queen Mother . . . hoping that, as she was less unknown to her than to the King, the Queen would give a little more credence to the facts. . . . She dictated

this letter at several different times and days, on one of which she was so ill, that it was feared she would not be able to sign it. But she grew better after a while, and did so without difficulty.'

The letter is a long one and, if without literary beauty, is full of sober dignity and the eloquence of grave sincerity. Angélique writes under the sense of impending death, rendered by it, as she says, indifferent to the judgement passed by men upon herself, but obliged still, for her Sisters' sake, to witness to the convent's innocence.

The mind of the aged Mother as, on her deathbed, she surveyed the course of God's providence upon her, did not dwell exclusively upon the maligned teacher Saint-Cyran, so closely connected with Port Royal, but reverted also to that earlier father of her spirit, S. François de Sales. And, knowing that the latter had stood in good favour at the Court and with Anne of Austria, she saw no better defence of her convent than to declare the conformity of Saint-Cyran's teaching with his. She can urge further, on behalf of her nuns, that they are nurtured in absolute ignorance of controversial matters and the points in dispute. They had not read even the *Fréquente Communion*, so anxious were their directors to keep controversy from them.

The letter so painfully indited was read lightly enough at the Court and produced at most a passing regret from Anne of Austria. Louis XIV was resolved on unqualified obedience, in matters religious as political, from his subjects, and the process of subduing this obstinate convent took its course.

For Angélique, outside events were now veiled and set at a distance. Her nuns fancied, it is true, that each fresh step in the destruction of Port Royal hastened on her malady, but rather did the consciousness of 'persecution' attend her deathbed as a solemn background to her more pressing personal affair, impending death.

The fate of the convent—her own last effort made—she resigned to the hand of God, rousing herself only on the occasion of a domiciliary visit to protest against the measures taken.

'On July the 12th, M. de Contes, Grand-Vicar of M. le Cardinal

de Retz, and M. Bail, entered the Chapter to open the visit of inspection, and assure themselves, according to the order the King had given them, of the state of the House. On returning from the Chapter they went up to the Mother Angélique's room to see her. M. de Contes, sitting down beside her, said: "You are ill then, my Mother. What is the matter with you?" She said: "Monsieur, I have dropsy." "Jesus, my Mother," answered M. de Contes, "you say that as a matter of course. Does not this illness alarm you?" "No, Monsieur," retorted the Mother, "I am infinitely more alarmed at what I see taking place in our House. For in fine I came hither to die, and must prepare for it; but I did not come to see all that I see now, and I had no reason to expect the treatment we are receiving. Monsieur, Monsieur, this is the hour of man. The hour of God will come, which shall disclose many things, and avenge all." She said that with great strength, and added: "I am convinced, Monsieur, that there are few Religious Houses where, if like search were made as in this, there would not be found more books, and more curiosity and knowledge concerning all the questions of the day, than among us. For assuredly, Monsieur, you will find in all our Sisters only a very simple faith."

'She said more, but could not well be heard. And, as they withdrew, she said to M. de Contes that he would not find her alive at the end of the inspection, which proved only too true, the inspection ending only on the 2nd of September, nearly a month after her death.

'Her trust and hope in God, as regards the actual distress of the House, ever increased in proportion as she came nearer death. So long as the inspection lasted, she had the consolation of seeing that this, which might perhaps have sown some seed of disaffection in such a juncture of affairs, served on the contrary only to confirm charity, unity, and peace. She could not avoid on these occasions testifying her joy to those who went to see her, and holding out to them hopes that God would restore the ruins of the House, since He preserved in it this unity which is the foundation.

'One day as we were speaking of the state to which the House was reduced, and each was prognosticating what would happen in the future, the Mother took up the discussion and said to us confidently: "Do not torment yourself about all that; as for me I have not the remotest anxiety as to the future on that account. I am not distressed as to whether our Boarders and our Novices will be restored to us, for I do not doubt it. But I am more concerned that the spirit of

retreat, of simplicity, of poverty and disinterestedness, should be preserved and re-established even better than at present : for one deteriorates always : and, given that these things subsist in the House, we may make light of all the rest. All that is done, and all that is purposed against us, I care no more about than about this fly"—driving one away, and in a manner so animated with faith and resolution that, on hearing her speak thus, one felt also that nothing was to be feared.

'About the end of July and a few days only before her death, when the Civil Lieutenant came again bringing fresh orders, and inspected all the quarters outside the cloister and even those in the neighbourhood, a Sister who was greatly alarmed spoke to her with dread, implying she did not know what they meant to do. The Mother said to her quite gaily : "But in truth, my Sister, what will they do to us? Why, if you were in the belly of the whale, God would bring you out." She replied : "But, my Mother, you frighten me, for you as good as say one must enter in." "No, my Daughter," responded the Mother, "you will not enter there, it is I who shall enter, and when Jonas is flung into the whale's belly, the storm will cease." On hearing another Nun sigh, she said to her : "My Daughter, fear nothing. When I am before God, I promise you to attend to your affairs."

'Only five days before her death, when she was already so weak that nothing more was told her, and she was in such a state of drowsiness as to heed hardly anything, it chanced that, as we were speaking in her presence, thinking she did not hear us, about the order, newly brought by the Civil Lieutenant, to brick up the gates of the cloister and of the gardens, requisite though they were for cartage, she woke up and asked what we were saying, and if there were something fresh, because we had not told her of it. We told her what it was, adding that one of us had asked if it were not to be feared that they who thus closed up our gates would at the same time close to themselves the gates of Heaven. She looked at us, and said in a voice manifesting her charity and zeal : "We must not say that, my children. We must pray God for them, and for ourselves that He will show us pity, and that His holy will be done."

'During a few days' respite in her illness, when she was able to take more deliberate part in the Nuns' Conferences, a Sister (probably the recording niece herself) asked her for advice in the event of all the threatened changes taking place. The Mother prescribed to her in detail the manner in which she should act, in order to wound neither justice nor charity, and to render to all persons the respect owed them, without relax-

ing, for compliance sake, any of the exactness of discipline. She advised her above all to hope in God, and said she had no doubt but that, if God permitted these troubles to come upon us, He would strengthen us to bear them; and that His truth . . . would enlighten us with the knowledge of what to do, when we should lack all other guidance.'

While thus, in her physical weakness, a stronghold of courage to her affrighted nuns, Angélique had upon herself the weighty sense of the dignity and glory of 'persecution', honour in all ages to the Christian. She hoped that she herself might be the Jonah to still the tempest for the nuns; but also that Port Royal might be the one convent whose sacrifice should bring peace to the many and to the Church :— ,

'Not only did she sustain these last trials in peace, but, in accordance with the words of S. Paul, she glorified also in her affliction and suffering. When a lady who came to see her during the early part of her illness spoke to her of what was taking place, she said to her: "When I think of the honour of this affliction, it makes me tremble. What are we that God should esteem us worthy to suffer for truth and for justice; undoubtedly we do not deserve this." And speaking to another lady on the same subject, but with a different feeling and sense of humility, looking rather to the result than to the cause of this affliction, she said to her: "Truly, Madame, God does all things with wonderful wisdom and great goodness. We had need of all that has happened to humble us. It would have been perilous for us to have remained longer in our plenitude. In all France there was no House more filled with spiritual riches, with right teaching and good guidance. We were spoken about on all sides. Believe me, it was needful for us that God should humiliate us. Had He not put us down, we should perhaps have fallen. Men know not why they do things, but God, who makes use of them for His own purposes, knows very well."'

She enlarged upon the same theme on the sole occasion during her illness when she saw the nuns as a body, the novitiate first.

A Sister attending her was unwilling one day, when the Mother seemed much exhausted, to leave her bedside for the Conference, at which she was due, of the Novitiate, and told her so.

'The Mother took occasion to say she need not go, but that she would be very glad to see the Sisters. It was a providence of God; for otherwise one would not have thought of letting her see either the Novitiate or the Community as a body, for fear of tiring her, and this was the only time she was able to do it during all her illness. When the Novitiate came and the subject of our actual sufferings was entered upon, she began to speak with so much vigour that it was thought necessary to interrupt her, for fear of her hurting herself. "I assure you, my Sisters," she said, "you must be neither dismayed nor cast down by what is happening to us. We have only to humble ourselves. For God does it on that account only. Believe me, one abuses the very best gifts. Pride almost always accompanies all wealth, and we enjoyed a certain plenitude of spiritual riches, which was not perhaps free from secret vanity. . . . One drew comparison perhaps between the spirit of this House" (its disinterestedness and retirement) "and that of others where the like things are not heeded, and before God this vanity sufficed to make all one's virtue as a house of cards. It was needful that God should humiliate us." . . . She would have spoken further, although it was with great effort; but we prevented her, seeing that she was doing herself harm.

'On the morrow, which was the 2nd of July, the Community came to see her at the same hour, and, on the Sisters expressing their sorrow at her manifold sufferings, she replied: "Suffering is nothing. There is no ground to pity the evils of this life, when one thinks of Eternity."'

Eternity was now indeed the thought before which, to the mind of Angélique, not only her own bodily suffering, but even the fate of Port Royal, dwindled into insignificance. All outside events were as nothing in view of the awful moment awaiting herself. Ever alive to the more dread aspect of the Christian faith, she was assailed now, despite all her long years of preparation, with the terrors of death and judgement:—

'A Sister one day observed to her that persons like her had no need to fear death, for she had prepared for it all her life. She responded: "That is not done by speaking well about it, and talking of it to others; but the true preparation for death is to renounce oneself wholly and be lost in God."

'Again she said: "One should think no more of the world during life than one does at the hour of death"; and "Never did I better understand than now what the Scripture says: 'Where

the tree falls there it must lie;' for truly in illness the tree has already fallen as it were, and is incapable of anything."

Her dread was most acute, as also 'her bodily sufferings were greatest, in the early stages of her illness. Her difficulty of breathing 'was to her a constant image of death, threatening any instant to strangle her'; and indeed, throughout almost the whole of her illness, she was unable to rest her head upon the pillow.

'She was day and night seated upon the bed, with her legs on the ground; or placed in a chair where she could not even lean back, obliged to gain breath by bending constantly forward.

'But, however great her discomforts and her pains, they were nothing in comparison with the state of mental suffering, in which God willed to set her during this time, to purify her more and more. For from the first time that she thought she was dying, death remained so graven on her mind that she could say with the Apostle, *Quotidie morior*. She thought only of that, and she spoke of nothing else, and that with so great a notion of the holiness of God and of her own unworthiness that she was lost in the contemplation. She said to us several times, and in a way which would have made the least fearful tremble: "Believe me, my children, believe what I tell you. One does not know what death is, and one does not think of it. For my part I have dreaded it all my life, and I have always thought of it; but whatever I have conceived is less than nothing in comparison of what it is, of what I feel, and of what I understand at this hour. Now the whole world is less than nothing. I find myself in a solitude and isolation from all things, such that it seems to me all I see, and all I hear, could not enter my mind to occupy the smallest place there, or divert it from the preoccupation which wholly fills it. From the manner I realize what death is, I can no longer understand how a Christian who has faith can think, or disquiet and busy himself, about any other thing all his life, than to remember he must die, and that he must prepare for this terrible hour."

'She seemed so filled with this thought that she took no further part in anything, and asked from the persons on whom she relied for Direction nothing save that they should say something to sustain her hope in God, and should pray to Him to forgive her sins. Whenever she was asked what she wished them to say from her to the Sisters, or to Port Royal des Champs, she had but one answer: "that they

should pray God to have pity upon me, and to forgive me my sins," which she said with such feeling and humility that it seemed as though she prostrated herself at the feet of those to whom she spoke.'

The isolating awe of death remained with Angélique to the end. But the acuter personal dread subsided, leaving her mind free to occupy itself again in some measure, though on a secondary plane as it were, with passing events.

A visit, surreptitiously paid her, by M. Singlin brought peace to her soul :—

'After having spoken to him of her trouble and received his counsel with her customary submissiveness, she said to him in an almost dying voice,—for she was very ill that day,—“I shall never see you again, my Father, but I promise you then I will no longer be afraid of God.” And, in effect, after that she was more at peace; and when, at the end of some time, she spoke again with dread of death, so soon as one of us reminded her of this promise she had made to be no longer afraid of God, she raised her eyes and said: “It is true, His mercy is everlasting. I will hope in Him.”'

The nuns attending their Mother's sick-room and the memoir-gathering niece Angélique in particular, eager for parting words and deathbed counsels, were careful to observe her every act. The virile nature of the woman showed itself in her dislike of this loving weakness of nuns. She had expressed to M. le Maître her fears lest, in their misguided affection, the Sisters should tell tales and gather relics of her, as of a saint. Now that the time had come, the Mother did what she could to circumvent their pious watchfulness. The narrative of her last days, though not brief, is, observes the narrating niece, 'shorter than might have been expected, because she of whom we are speaking took special heed during this illness, which she knew to be her last, to say very little and to do nothing remarkable, for fear it should in effect be remarked, and made a ground for talk about her and esteem of her':—

'This could easily be told by seeing her behaviour; but God permitted that she also explained herself on an unexpected occasion. One of us urged her to say something for us to send from her to some persons who greatly loved her, and, after having refused two or three times, it escaped her to say,

as we still importuned her, that she knew very well why she refused, and that she wished to take away all excuse for the idle talk common on such occasions, which are made a pretext for conversing and saying one to another: "*Our late Mother said this*"; and "*to me she said that*", all which merely would give opportunity to the Démon, who made use of everything to distract us from the thought of God, from the inward *recueillement* and silence to which Religious are pledged, and that she had well observed all that had been said about the Mother Marie des Anges, dead now two years; that they perhaps thought they could do as much by her, and that it was not the same. Someone present answered her, that this good Mother whom she so esteemed had not acted thus, and had spoken and gratified those who had asked her something during her illness. To which she responded: "That was all very well for her, who had great simplicity and much humility. I am not like her."

At a moment, when death seemed imminent, the Mother Agnès, now Abbess, begged her blessing for herself and all her nuns, but Angélique made a sign to indicate it was not for her to give it:—

'And when the Confessor present said to her that the rank which God had given her of Mother of the whole House gave her the right of blessing them, she lowered her eyes and struck her breast three times without making other answer.'

The difficulty of breathing yielded after three weeks to a profound drowsiness, from which, by the doctors' orders, she was continually roused.

'They wished us to fight against it constantly, by distracting her, and this slight violence done in order to rouse her was torture to her mind and body. For she was so occupied with the thought of God and of death that she found it hard to endure the indifferent matters talked about, when she had such great and solemn things in her mind. Nevertheless she dissembled it with much gentleness, save on the occasions when, as the only means of rousing her, we urged her to speak; and sometimes she told us her views, and among other things the constant thought she had of death, and how it set her at a distance from everything.'

This state of exhaustion yielded in its turn to other symptoms, to a swelling of the limbs which seemed to the doctors less alarming, and a slight passing hope of recovery was entertained. There were a few days in which her mind regained

some freedom and vigour, and she could pay more heed to what was said.

‘Accordingly we spoke to her of all that was taking place and that was being done against this House ; and she listened to all with a like peace and strength as in health, giving us courage to suffer ever humbly and to trust in God.’

The sustaining words now from time to time won from her, have been narrated. On all other matters, as already said, she strove not to speak. Her zeal in combating all softness and self-indulgence and her nuns’ excessive care for her comfort, found however no infrequent vent.

She was consoled for the invalid chair, and for contrivances of pillows, &c., essential to any comfort in her painful illness, only by the thought they would serve other patients for whom perhaps they would not otherwise have been provided. But when, to these real necessities of the case, some ill-advised Sister added superfluous care either for comfort or appearance, she did not contain herself. To one who spoke of a covering against draughts : ‘My God !’ she said, ‘will they always find these pretexts ? that does not affect my malady, and I am not afraid of cold ; one must confine oneself to what is necessary.’

‘One day she said to my Sister Marie de l’Incarnation (le Conte), “I have much occasion to ask your forgiveness, my Sister, yours and the whole Community’s, for I am so wicked as constantly to lose patience and do ill to everybody.” Sister Marie de l’Incarnation replied it was rather for us to ask her forgiveness very humbly for all the grounds of trouble we had given her. Afterwards our Mother said to her : “I beg you have me buried in the burial ground” (i.e. as an ordinary nun), “and do not let them be guilty of such trifling after my death.” [*Qu’on ne fasse pas tant de grimaces*, was her vigorous phrase, as she made the like request to the Mère Agnès.]

‘On July 27, she was taken in the afternoon with a great attack of shivering, which lasted two hours. . . . She saw well that we were greatly depressed at this, however much we tried not to show it ; and, looking at us very tenderly, she said to us : “That is nothing extraordinary, I have been expecting this cold, death comes in no other way. . . .” From that day,

she grew worse and weakened visibly. On the morrow, which was the Feast of S. Anne, she communicated at two in the morning. She did so several times during her illness, and always so devoutly that several of the Sisters said that, in order to rouse their own devotion, they had only to recall her countenance as she took the Communion.

‘On Thursday, August the 4th, eve of her death, she was extremely ill, and spent the night in great restlessness, but more conscious and less drowsy. She prayed continuously, but could scarcely be heard, except when she strove to raise her voice, as she did in the morning, when I was with her, to pronounce the words: “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive. . . .” I said to her: “My Mother, you forget us, and pray only for yourself.” She at once clasped her hands and said, in a tone to penetrate the listener: “My God, have pity upon us all; I say upon all, my God, upon all. . . .” She fell again into drowsiness for a little while; then, waking up, said several times, “Adieu, adieu”. I asked her why she said that, and she answered: “My children, I am going.”

‘At eight in the morning, the next day, the doctor thought it best not to postpone letting her communicate in Viaticum for the third and last time. At this proposal she roused herself completely. . . . Shortly before the Sacrament entered, she lifted her eyes to a Cross in front of her bed, and raising her voice said: “O Jesus, O Jesus, You are my God, You are my judge, You are my strength, You are my all:” and she pronounced these last words with so much zeal that she seemed to pour out her whole heart. She received the Holy Viaticum with a fervour which animated all her countenance, and with a serenity and peace as of Heaven. And afterwards, seeing all the community dissolve into tears as they prepared to escort back the Holy Sacrament, she said to them, “Adieu, my children, Adieu, let us go to God.” Then she thanked the Priest. . . . She afterwards gave her blessing to all the Community, and to several persons who begged it separately: saying little words of comfort to all who were beside her, and herself remembering other friends, to whom she sent word they should be of good courage, and hope ever in God. And turning to a Sister who had always served her, and whom she heard weeping greatly, she said to her: “How human you are still.”’

About nine on the Saturday evening the Mother Angélique passed quietly away, ‘all her restlessness changed into a species of lethargy.’ The community scarcely quitted her

room all the day. It was the Day of the Transfiguration, and as at Nones they read the appointed lesson, of the vision of S. John when, transported in spirit upon a high mountain, he saw the Holy City descend from Heaven, the nuns called to mind the vision almost parallel, though it was but in a dream, which Angélique had told them,—how, more than forty years before, at the time she first set her thoughts on reform of her convent, she dreamt of the church descending on a high mountain and, seeking to enter, awoke saying: “I am not worthy: I must return to work and fight.” It was perhaps a dream prophetic, the nuns thought, of the day upon which she should die. She had told it them several times, and yet again in these last months on being asked.

Not for all her wishes, could Angélique escape after death something of the usage of a saint. Her body was exposed at the grille of the church, and the people, flocking to see it, were so urgent in their prayers to touch it with their rosaries and medals, that they would not take repeated refusal, and had at length to be gratified. Two persons were engaged the whole evening, and from the next morning until the funeral, in merely taking in at the grille, and giving back, all that was passed through to touch the body:—

‘Those who had neither rosary nor image had it touched with their books, their rings, linen or even paper, and kissed them when returned with a reverence which was the mark of their piety. There were even some who, having nothing else, passed in their handkerchiefs all steeped in tears, to touch her. They said out loud that it was the Mother of the poor whom they had lost. Others said that, if this good Mother were not a saint, they did not know who could be. In fine this crowd ceased only when she was carried to the grave; and the Ecclesiastics themselves who were admitted to take part in the burial, kissed her hands as the body was carried out of the Church in token of their reverence, although they were not persons of the House, nor any who had special acquaintance with her. She died on Saturday, the 6th of August (1661), at the age of 70, all but a month, and was buried on the 8th’ (not as she had begged, in the general burial-ground, but) ‘before the choir of our House in Paris. Her heart was taken to Port Royal des Champs.’



DEATH-MASK OF THE MÈRE ANGÉLIQUE

CONCLUSION

THE death of Angélique brought no peace to Port Royal, nor did the sorrows of the nuns end with the dismissal of novices and pupils.

The long-threatened signature to the Formula became now the urgent matter. That document, originally drawn up at the Assembly of Bishops in 1657, brought, as we saw, the Five Propositions definitely home to Jansenius. To sign it was to declare, not the condemned doctrine only, but the *Augustinus*, heretical. The resolve of the King to obtain unqualified obedience, on the one hand, and the dislike of Port Royal to subterfuge, on the other, made attempted compromise in vain. Only a pause of eighteen months, due to a quarrel between Louis himself and the Pope, gave the nuns time to redeem their former ignorance of controversial matters and to decide upon their part.

They were definitely put to the test the year following the death of the Mère Angélique (1662), and refused, all save five or six, to give a signature which should assert, not merely their own orthodoxy, but also the heresy of one whom their teachers revered. Anxious at the same time to show submission to the Church, they at first signed, with the reservation that they were not admitting the condemned doctrine to be in the *Augustinus*, but such signature was not accepted; and they suffered accordingly the penalty of the King's displeasure and the Pope's.

First, banished severally to alien convents, the senior nuns experienced the fate Angélique had so cheerfully anticipated for herself. Then, since isolation did not move them, and since their board cost money, the recalcitrant nuns were reunited in the Convent des Champs,—the Paris House, no longer Port Royal save in name, was given to more submissive spirits—, and placed there in a manner of imprisonment, guarded by

soldiers from outside intercourse, and, more grievous trial to these daughters of the Church, placed under papal interdict.

‘How human you are still!’ was the last observation of the Mother Angélique to the weeping nuns attending her,—her very last words were a farewell message to certain persons *du dehors*, presumably her brothers, that they should live in peace and charity.

The message has, to the ears of the plain man, looking to the after-history of Port Royal, an ironic strain. Peace truly was not to be, in any obvious sense, for the champions of the doctrine of grace, for the indefatigable controversialist Antoine Arnauld least of all; and in the long enduring combat charity, it scarce can be denied, was much impaired. Disinterested zeal was fretted by persecution into party spirit; brotherly love dwindled to comradeship. Angélique herself had been unable to see any good outside the pale of grace; in later days, as the reproach of Jansenism became *le pot noir* with which the Jesuits blackened all their enemies, so, for the ‘Jansenists’, the pale of grace grew sadly narrow.

And for the nuns, they remained in truth very ‘human’,—in more ways than in the fondness of their love for Angélique.

Their convent-virtue was called now to other tests than the observance of their Rule, than patience in illness and mutual acts of charity or zealous regulated labour. They were brought to face conflicting authorities and a divided duty, to exercise judgement and discretion rather than unquestioning obedience, and to nurse charity meanwhile as best they might. Their nerves irritated by misrepresentation and cross-questioning, they developed, some of them, an unsuspected power of repartee, as of graphic portraiture. The Archbishop Péréfixe, who naïvely hoped to cajole these mere nuns into compliance, was utterly worsted in the trial of wit and is mercilessly portrayed, as he lost his temper and forgot his dignity, in their later narratives and lengthy scenes of self-defence¹. ‘*Petite Pimbésche*’, he so far forgot himself as

¹ v. *Divers Actes, Lettres et Relations des Religieuses de Port-Royal* . . . [1724]; and *Histoire des Persécutions des Religieuses de Port-Royal, Ecrites par elles-mêmes*, 1753.

to address the abbess, now Mère Magdeleine de Sainte-Agnès *de Ligni*,¹ and the excited nuns were swift to record the lapse of episcopal courtesy, as also the discomfiture of the Archbishop on reading their report of his demeanour. The Sisters of the Visitation, set in charge for a time over the nuns left at Port Royal, received no kinder measure, and the nuns trained by our Mother Angélique scoffed at the excessive genuflexions of the new Mère Eugénie, even as those from Tard had ridiculed the customary prostrations of Angélique herself. The few who signed fared worst of all at the hands of their loyal sisters and, unless in the case of those who, after signing the Formula for obedience's sake to the Church, recanted in bitter penitence for disloyalty to the truth and to their convent, survive in our memoirs only as hopeless children of wrath. One, Sœur Flavie—the very nun who, as Mistress of the children, was instrumental in the great miracle of the Holy Thorn—became an eager advocate of the signature, from motives, the loyal nuns were sure, of mere personal ambition. And, for her, their wits were sharpened to discover vanity beneath her mortifications, greed behind her fasting, and all the subtle wiles of self-love which Angélique would have had them quick to note only in themselves.

The loosing of mere human wit makes these later narratives entertaining reading and, were it not for their undue prolixity, they would rank high as scenes of life and character. They lie outside our present scope, and breathe another atmosphere than Angélique's 'tale of God's providence'.

The loftier spirit remained, however, vital at Port Royal, tempering, if it could not dominate, the excitement of self-defence and angry martyrdom.

There are other narratives from nuns in exile that breathe the higher air. The aged Mère Agnès preserved her rapt devoutness in an alien house, and her gentle nature, fixed in its own resolve, would fain have left all others free to sign if conscience let them. She thus said no restraining word when the young niece, one of d'Andilly's daughters—permitted

¹ Elected in 1661 in succession to the Mère Agnès, grown too infirm for the office.

to be with her by reason of her bodily needs—was tempted to sign, but she lamented her ‘lack of zeal’ when the act was followed by grievous remorse.

The Mère Agnès was of the older generation—a last survivor. But the younger had too a representative worthy in all respects to stand beside the former Mothers. The niece Angélique de S. Jean, chosen in her turn Abbess when peace again prevailed, is the dominant figure in the later history of Port Royal as our Mère Marie Angélique was in the earlier. And upon her the fire of persecution had but a refining influence.

In her exile, alone, in an unfriendly convent, Sœur Angélique de S. Jean was vainly urged to comply with the commands of her diocesan Bishop and sign the Formula. News was brought to her that one after another of the Sisters had signed, at last the false news that even the Mère Agnès had yielded. Then at length the faith of this Angélique was confounded. In every other instance she could see, she tells, some weakness or self-confidence which might well leave the relapsing Sister a prey to evil, but in the Mother Agnès none. If God could desert her, whom might He not desert? She was assailed by doubts of God’s providence, doubts—we do not know how far extending—of the faith to which her life was pledged.

This Angélique was a woman of intellect. In her childhood even, in the convent, her strong intelligence threatened, we are told, to be her ruin. Her father M. d’Andilly declared of her, so Madame de Sévigné reports, ‘You may reckon that all my brothers, and all my children, and I, are fools in comparison with Angélique.’¹

Her mind, convent-bred however strong, had now to grapple with doubt of all which gave life its value in her eyes, of the whole order of ideas in which she had moved from infancy; and she passed through a time of profound anguish.

On the immediate problem, whether she herself should sign the Formula, she had no doubt. Though God were not, the way of simple truth and honesty remained the only one to walk in. She would not sign what she did not know to be true. And, after long distress, her mind cleared,

¹ *Lettres de Madame de Sévigné*: (A Madame de Grignon: 29 novembre, 1679.)

and faith, confirmed when she learnt the report was false, came back to her. The trial had but strengthened her for the future. Her younger, weaker sister, who had signed and then retracted, when she met her again after that exile, found her scarce recognizable physically, so worn and thin she looked, but full of 'spiritual riches gained in her captivity and bonds'.

For five years the nuns were thus deprived, not only of intercourse with their spiritual Fathers, but even of the rites of the Church to which they clung,—their sole comfort thoughts, strangely akin to the protestantism they abhorred, of spiritual communion. A dying nun, urged to sign that she might receive the last sacrament and be duly buried by the Church, could recall bravely that Christ Himself had no consecrated burial-ground.

France, even Louis XIV, grew tired of the strife and of this spectacle of virtuous, if obstinate, women kept in such straits. The accession of a new Pope, Clement IX, opened the door to the Peace of the Church (1669). A more general wording was given to the Formula, and the nuns, assured that it implied no condemnation of Jansen, or of the true doctrine of grace, signed it with a clear mind. The interdict was raised and yet again the Convent of Port Royal flourished for a time, again taking in novices and children.

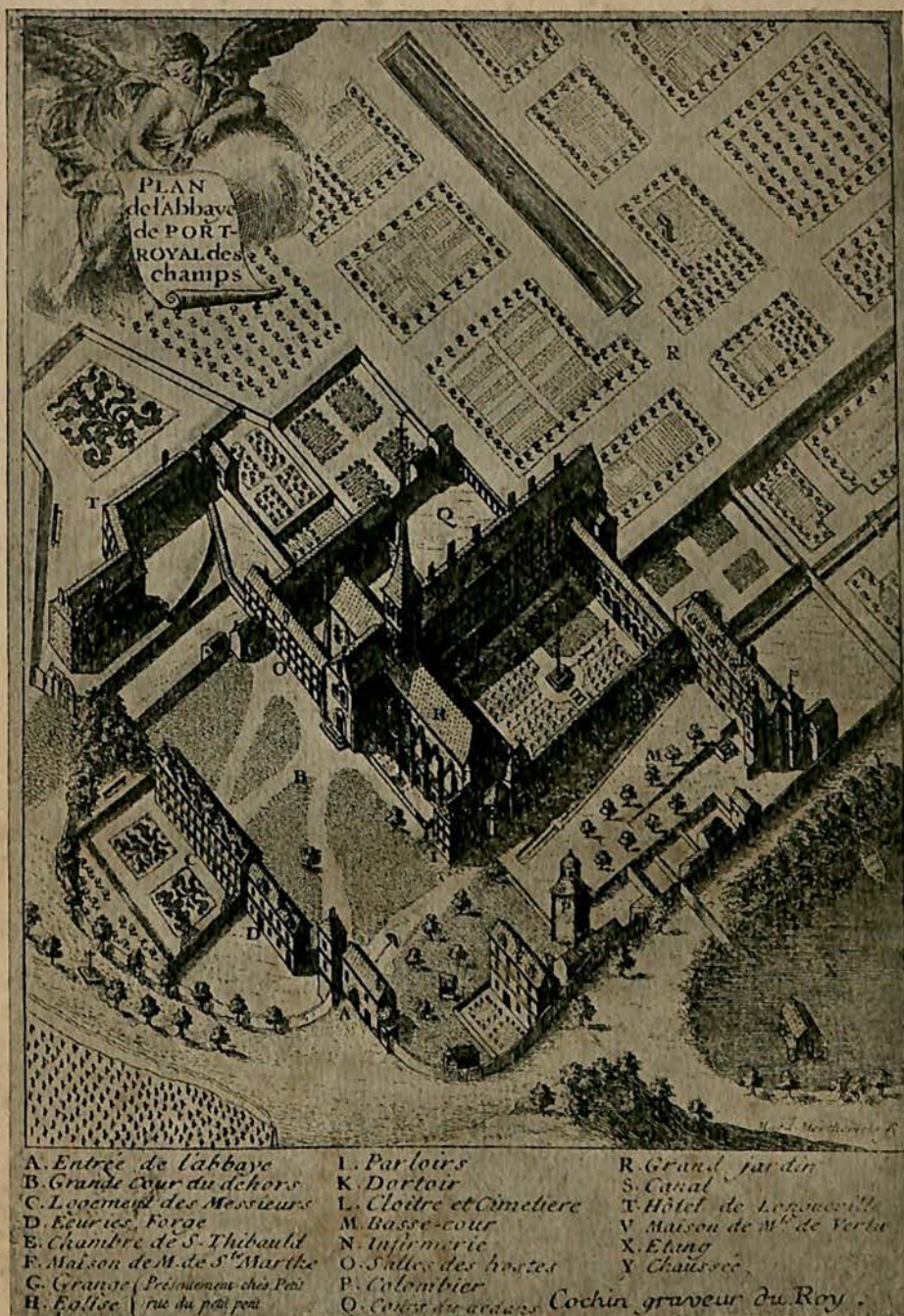
Formally divorced from the Paris House, it was now again a country convent only; but friends gave it powerful support, while recluses gathered again on the adjacent hill. Unhappily for itself, Port Royal had been too prominently before the public to fall again into obscurity. Its speedy growth during the ten ensuing years shows how warmly the sympathies of onlookers had been with the recalcitrant nuns. Madame de Sévigné may be taken as representative of general cultivated opinion and, though she smiled at the force of prejudice on the one side as on the other, she was at bottom all for Port Royal. S. Augustine, she perceived, was 'bien Janséniste' and S. Paul also. 'Les Jésuites,' she observes, 'ont un fantôme qu'ils appellent Jansénius, auquel ils disent mille injures, et ne font pas semblant de voir où cela remonte . . . et là-dessus

ils font un bruit étrange, et réveillent les disciples cachés de ces deux grands saints.’¹

Great ladies again frequented and patronized the convent when reinstated. The second Duchesse de Longueville, heroine of the Fronde, gave her protection and support to Port Royal in these latter days, proving, in her penitence for past follies, a spirit more truly to its mind than her virtuous predecessor, the first duchess, who, as we learn from the Mère Angélique’s narrative, patronized the early foundation of the *Maison du S. Sacrement*. Madame de Longueville divided her time and attentions between Port Royal in the country and the Carmelites in Paris; her friend Mlle de Vertus took up her abode entirely at Port Royal. These two had retired from ‘the world’. But Port Royal was visited also, and kept warmly in remembrance, by persons even at the Court; notably by the Duchesse de Grammont who, as Mary Hamilton, had passed her childhood as pupil in the convent before becoming maid of honour in the Court of Charles II. Racine, occupying the post of royal historiographer to Louis, was notoriously a friend, penitent and devoted, to Port Royal where, with the recluses, he too had passed years of boyhood and where his aunt was still among the last nuns surviving from the early days.

There is no stronger witness to the merits of Port Royal than the respect which it commanded in a light and witty age, from men and women swift to ridicule, to read the *dessous des cartes*, and eager after pleasures which Port Royal condemned. But the renewed prosperity of the convent was its undoing. Though it had constrained for a time the tolerance of the great king, it never won his favour; and the favour which his subjects showed it, in face of his own disapproval, was a fresh source of offence. ‘On ne va pas de Port-Royal à Marly’ was his verdict, and the Duchesse de Grammont was excluded from the coveted privilege. As, with age, intolerance and absolutism grew upon him, Louis resolved to make an end of this House, tainted in his eyes always with heresy and with the equal crime of contumacy. Again, without fresh specific reason, the convent was forbidden to

¹ *Lettres de Madame de Sévigné* (Lettre du 9 juin, 1680).



PLAN OF PORT ROYAL DES CHAMPS SHORTLY BEFORE ITS DESTRUCTION

From engraving by Cochin

take novices or pupils. Again the nuns were called upon to declare that the Five Propositions were in Jansen's work; and again they refused to sign, appealing, though vainly, to the 'Clementine peace'.

The end of Port Royal had now come. Denied the power of recruiting their number, the community could only die out gradually. And even this was not enough for Louis in his later mood or for his Jesuit adviser. In October, 1709, it was decreed that the two-and-twenty aged nuns still remaining should be dispersed and the Convent of Port Royal finally destroyed. These last survivors of our sisterhood finished accordingly their days in other convents, while, the year following, the outward frame of Port Royal des Champs was razed to the ground.

The act of violence was the final crown of martyrdom in the eyes of sympathizing friends, and stamped the image of Port Royal the more deeply on their hearts. The movement of 'Jansenism' went on, narrowing, but growing in violence; becoming, whether 'heretical' or no, unquestionably *sectarian* in spirit. And the name of Port Royal was a watchword in this movement; the site of its ruins was cherished by pious care and, still so cherished, is to this very day a place of pious memories as of historic interest. Only in these latter days perhaps, when even religious controversy has entered upon new phases and buried ancient strife, can we look with just eyes upon these victims to a cause,—who win our wider sympathies because their cause was not that merely of a doctrine, but of honour also and of personal loyalty.

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